Vol. 1

OPINIONS OF THE COLONIAL PRESS.

"THE VOLUNTEER REVIEW,"

CANADA, *Jan.* 27, 1874.

WE have to acknowledge the receipt, from Mr. T. D. Sullivan, late 56th Regiment, Literarian and Assistant Secretary to "The Royal United Institution," of a pamphlet "On Colonial Defence," by Captain J. C. R. Colomb, late R.M.A., read before the Royal Colonial Institute on 28th June, 1870, which we deem of sufficient value to reprint for the benefit of our readers, because it contains not only a vast amount of sound military strategy as applied to a subject considered almost without the pale of that science, but clear logical deductions which point unmistakably to the political as well as practical necessity which exists for the application of the Federal principle to the dependencies of the Empire.

The strategy of defence as applied to its outlying and isolated dependencies is treated with the confidence of a master-hand, and the total ignorance of the principles on which it is based as manifested by the British Government, illustrated by incidents in the career of Admiral Semmes and the *Alabama*, showing how England paid three millions sterling, not because of the damage done by that bold cruiser, but because Mr. Wells, the United States' Secretary of the Navy, was utterly ignorant of military strategy.

We quite agree with the gallant lecturer, that a Federation of the Empire is a necessity—that a Federal fleet and a Federal army are requirements of the day, and that the defence of Great Britain, as well of its most insignificant dependency, is incomplete without it. We are also certain that the Colonies are prepared to pay their share of the cost as well as to bear their share of the burthens; as far as Canada is concerned no difficulty would be found in applying any portion of her army to Imperial purposes if necessity required, nor would she be wholly defenceless as far as naval power is concerned; one of her people (Sir Hugh Allan) controls the largest and finest line of ocean steamships possessed

by any company in the world—vessels that would realise the gallant captain's idea of efficient ocean cruisers in the amplest sense of the term. With all those advantages we still require political consideration, and the infusion into the councils of the Empire of an element that will always enlarge the political idea, and teach the English people that its defence means something more than the "hedge-rows" of the United Kingdom. Speaking for ourselves, we want the recognition of the principle that there is no difference in the Imperial policy between the County of Middlesex in England, and the County of Middlesex in the Dominion of Canada. Captain Colomb has formulated that idea, conclusively shows how it can be carried out, and we leave his valuable paper to our readers, with the assurance that it will meet their approval, and be worthy their attention.

"THE ENGLISHMAN,"

CALCUTTA, *April* 24, 1874.

BY a late mail we received a pamphlet on "Colonial Defence," being a lecture delivered on that subject before the Royal Colonial Institute by Captain J. C. R. Colomb, late R.M.A. As this officer justly observes, it is difficult to deal with so important a subject in even a paper of twenty-five pages, much more so is it impossible to do justice to it in an editorial. It is more than probable that the question will be fully discussed this session in Parliament. As Captain Colomb remarks, "England with her Colonies is a giant among nations, and without them she would be a dwarf." The question thus resolves itself into the following:—"What have we done for the defence of our Colonies? What is the best means to adopt to secure our trade, to protect our mercantile fleet and our Colonies? What we have done to protect our Colonies requires no consideration. We have done literally nothing, except saying to them, 'Be to the mother country as inexpensive as possible, be self-reliant, expend as much money as you can afford in protecting yourselves, and, if war breaks out, we must contemplate your handing over your lives and property to any foe with whom we happen to be at war.'"

The contributions from Colonies in aid of military expenditure in 1873-4 was as follows:—Cape of Good Hope, £10,000; Ceylon, £146,155; Hongkong, £19,677; Malta, £6,200; Mauritius, £32,760; Natal, £4,000; Straits Settlements, £59,300; West Indies, £4,000.

In the Army estimates for 1873-4, we find the following: £20,000 for the defence of Bermuda Dockyard; at Gibraltar, for alterations, £10,500; and £5,000 for similar works at Malta, and £20,000 for the defence of its new dockyard; whilst for home-defences Parliament passed £20,000 for a battery on Dover pier, £15,000 for the defence of the Mersey, £20,000 for the defence of Harwich, and £15,000 for new powder-magazines on the Medway. At a glance it is thus seen what we expended at home, and how much we placed at the disposal of our Colonies; without which England would be reduced to the position she occupied in the world before her Colonial Empire commenced. Some years ago it was the habit of some politicians to depreciate the value of our Colonial possessions, and describe them as a sheer encumbrance and a dead-weight. In 1859, on the motion of General Peel, a Committee, composed of one member from the War Office, one from the Colonial Office, and one from the Treasury, met to take into consideration the question of Colonial defence. Three reports were the consequence, but as they were diametrically opposed in their views, the result was *nil*. Mr. Mills stated in that year that the annual expenditure for our Colonies was £4,000,000, but that he would not include Malta, Gibraltar, Hongkong, and the Ionian Islands in the report; yet it was subsequently shown that in the total he did include the expenses of those Colonies. However, years have passed on, and we have reduced our military expenditure to the minimum, and at this moment, not including British troops in the three Presidencies of India, we have twenty-five battalions in our Colonies. To show of how little value to England are her Colonial possessions, in the year 1873 we exported to our British possessions goods to the value of £66,441,237, which is exactly a third of the value of all our exports to every part of the globe—the imports from British possessions in the same period amounting to £79,372,853. In case of war what are we to do for the protection of this commerce? To quote the words of Captain Colomb, "The ground to be defended consists of ten groups of territory, separated by long sea-distances—the British Islands, British North America, the West Indies, the West Coast of Africa, the Cape, the Mauritius, Australasia, Hongkong, the Straits Settlements, and India." The Imperial main lines of communication are:—"To British North America, across the North Atlantic; to the West Indies, to India, China, and Australasia by the Mediterranean; to India, China, and Australasia round the Cape; from Australasia and the Pacific round Cape Horn." How are we to protect these lines? We must have a fleet of ships capable of carrying the heaviest armament, yet

affording ample space for a large supply of coals. We must have our coaling stations well protected. What is the use of our depots for coals, if any of the enemy's fleet have simply to proceed and destroy them? In the West Indies, as Captain Colomb states, "the great coaling station, St. Thomas, is not in our possession." Some people are inclined to argue that we have the command of the seas. Command with what? With steamers, with the coaling depôts not secured, with no arsenals well protected from bombardment where they might obtain munitions of war, with no docks secure from an enemy's fleet. We have only to look to the case of the *Alabama*, sunk in English waters, because she had no place to refit, no dock to which she might proceed, "to be overhauled, and have her boilers repaired." So, without sufficient ammunition, and in her imperfect state, she was sunk in seventy minutes. Have we a large naval arsenal in the Eastern seas? Have we Port Defence vessels? Are all our harbours protected by torpedoes? And, if they were, have we a body of men instructed in their use? It would appear as if we laboured under the opinion, in case of war, that our enemies would never think of bombarding our ports, of interfering with our commerce, of destroying our supplies of coals, or of attacking any of our possessions. We have withdrawn our troops from the Colonies, and we have said to them, "Protect yourselves," and we have given them no arms and no guns, so that they might follow the advice given. We have five millions of surplus at home, a large portion of which is derived from our customers; and we are oblivious of the fact that, if they ceased to exist, our revenue might possibly decrease.

The next point is, what is the best means to adopt to secure our trade, protect our mercantile fleet and our Colonies? Captain Colomb is of opinion that we must centralise our efforts on the protection of our main lines of communication:—"The line to Canada. The only point here to be considered is the terminal one, Halifax. The line to the West Indies. Here we must strengthen Bermuda, the Bahamas, Jamaica, and Antigua. The line to India, the East, and Australasia, by the Mediterranean. The points here are Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, Bombay, and King George's Sound on the main line; with Trincomalee, Singapur, and Hongkong on its northern branch." Were these lines secure, and we had a strong naval arsenal in the Eastern hemisphere, with ships and stores in reserve, we should then have a base for our naval operations in the East. At present, in case of a war with any maritime power, we should have (in the opinion of Captain Colomb) to ask private firms to supply our fleet with coals, and all they required

to keep them in a state of efficiency. Of all the Imperial lines which we should have to defend, the one to the East will be the most difficult. It might be imperative to occupy in force the Isthmus of Suez. We should require a large fleet in the East; but how is it to be kept in a state fit for naval warfare, unless there exist means in the East for supply and repair, independent of our home resources? Anyone acquainted with the geography of our Colonial possessions can with ease ascertain for himself whether we are secure in case of war. We are well aware that we have not vessels in our fleet so constructed as to be capable of remaining at sea for a long period of time, and be able fully to hold their own against any maritime power. As Captain Colomb states, "The fleets necessary for the safety of the Channel and the Mediterranean are not adapted for the protection of distant lines, nor are the vessels suited for the defence of those lines of any value as a reserve force in the defence of the Channel and the Mediterranean." The whole question thus resolves itself into consideration of the best position for erecting a large naval arsenal in the East; the protection of our coaling depôts; fortifying the strategic points of our lines of communications; and our having at disposal docks where our vessels could be repaired, and at the same time be secure against bombardment from an enemy's fleet.

The question as to the military force for the protection of our Colonies is far beyond our limits. But if they are to be self-reliant, we should provide them with guns for the armament of their batteries, as also other warlike supplies. We should give the Colonies the best arms we can supply them with. We might go further, and give them drill-instructors. We believe we are right in stating that the two monitors stationed at Bombay for the protection of the harbour are too weak in men to be able to work their guns with the proper reserve necessary for a naval action. It is therefore self-evident that the question of Colonial defence is not deemed worthy of that consideration which the question merits. It is true that last September the Duke of Manchester and Colonel Jervois had a little quill-war as to the defence of Canada. The latter stated that, "Although the Canadian frontier cannot be defended against the passage of an invading force, yet, if proper military measures be taken, the defence of Canada can be rendered possible, much in the same sense that the defence of Belgium has been rendered possible by means of the great entrenched camp at Antwerp. The Canadian Government voted a million of pounds sterling for the purpose, but it has subsequently been applied to aid in the construction of the Pacific Railway."

The Imperial census has lately given us the population of our Colonies. We have in the Dominion of Canada 3,789,370 inhabitants, occupying an area of 3,376,925 square miles. The West India Islands, with an area of 13,109 square miles, have a population of a little more than one million. In the African Continent and the adjacent islands we are masters of 236,860 square miles of territory, peopled by 1,813,450 inhabitants. In the Indian Seas, before reaching our Indian Empire, we have the Mauritius, with an area of 708 miles, and a population of 330,460 inhabitants. In our Australasian settlements we have West Australia, with 978,000 square miles, and 24,785 inhabitants. South Australia, with 760,000 square miles, and a population of 185,626 white, and 3,369 aboriginal inhabitants. Victoria, with an area of 88,000 square miles, has 731,528 inhabitants (including 17,935 Chinese). New South Wales has on its 323,437 square miles 503,981 inhabitants. Queensland and Tasmania have a population of 219,432; Norfolk Island, 401; and New Zealand, "the England of the southern hemisphere," and one of the youngest born of the Colonies, had a white population in 1871 of 256,393, whilst the aborigines were estimated at 37,500. Then we have India with her countless millions; Ceylon, with a population of 2,405,287; Singapur, 197,000; Penang, 67,000; Province Wellesley, 71,000; Malacca, 77,000; Hong-Kong and the Peninsula of Kowloon, 120,000. To this world-wide and enormous population, all owing allegiance to England—without which she would cease to be a paramount power—she gives from her revenue a few thousands of pounds for defensive purposes, forgetting, as before stated, that we exported in 1873 to our British possessions goods to the value of sixty-six millions, whilst our imports from those possessions exceeded seventy-nine millions.

"THE NATAL MERCURY,"

May 23, 1874.

On the 28th June, 1873, a clever paper "On Colonial Defence" was read before the Royal Colonial Institute at their annual meeting by Captain J. L. C. Colomb, His Grace the Duke of Manchester being in the chair. It is not our present purpose to review the suggestions and opinions of the author in so far as the entire question under discussion is concerned, but only to touch upon one important point of vital interest to the future political construction of South Africa.

Captain Colomb prefaces his paper by stating, and very truly stating too, that "in time of profound peace we like to talk of our vast Colonial Empire, our extended commerce, and interests in every part of the globe." It is "habitually forgot that England with her Colonies is still a giant among nations, and that without them she would be a dwarf"—"practically disbelief in the giant is evinced by seeking refuge in the arms of the dwarf." It is "the duty of statesmen to cast their eyes beyond the shores of happy England, to look beyond the streak of silver sea, and to face this truth, viz. that the security of the United Kingdom against invasion is but a part of the great question of National Defence." "Our commercial prosperity is in direct proportion to the freedom with which we can carry on trade with our Colonies and other countries. Commerce is, in fact, the link that binds together the several interests of the scattered territories comprising the Empire."

In order to protect commerce it is evident communications must be secured; and Captain Colomb, adopting this axiom, deduces cleverly that "communications, whether by sea or land, whether long or short, can only be secured by a firm grasp of the points which command them." In fact, a base of operations is essential for our ships; "naval stores and coaling stations are vital necessities for our men-of-war at the present day, for," asks the author, "can we dream of private firms during maritime war taking contracts to maintain, in a state of efficiency, war fleets 6,000 and 10,000 miles off?"

A Colony is not now removed from danger of attack by remoteness, and the vessels which England in case of war should furnish to defend her Colonies must plainly be during war time independent to a large degree of home support. Ports of strategic importance, where docks, a coaling station, machinery for repairs, &c., are available for our commercial fleets in peace, our protecting squadrons in war, are of vital necessity, and reserve naval arsenals are of the utmost moment.

Here on the east coast Delagoa Bay is naturally a magnificent harbour, and our "strategic port." Batteries on Inyack Island would protect Port Melville from any attack, and a few guns under Point Reuben, and on the Mapoota side of English River, would secure Lorenço Marques from all interference. For years the question of boundary has been discussed between England and Portugal; the flag of each country waves by turns over Inyack, and petty squabbles and recriminations, involving heavy losses to enterprise and commerce, have in too many instances taken the form

of national reprisals, to the injury of British subjects. It is high time the arbitration of this disputed territory should be swiftly urged to a climax. Lydenburg Gold Fields promise to grow into larger dimensions and develop trade; land and houses have quadrupled in value at the town of Lorenço Marques; yet we hear no word from England, see no sign from our Government; and in the meanwhile the fair island of Inyack is useless and unoccupied, save by a few Amatongas, who anxiously press for British rule. Lorenço Marques we cannot claim, but why should we not offer, as the German Government did, to farm the port for 100 years? Portugal entertained the question readily, and an arrangement was only upset by an unfavourable report from officers sent to examine into the coast settlements. Their impressions were influenced by the bad fortune and the ill-health which followed their expedition from the outset. Natal would with Delagoa Bay not only control the Zulus, influence the labour market, and ensure Amatonga labour, but also possess the qualification required by the Transvaal before Confederation. British rule is sadly wanted to control and counteract the deadening Portuguese thraldom in which the native races are held. A little money spent on Inyack would carry our fame to the Zambezi, and do more to stop interior slave trade on that river than "the noise of many cruisers."

If we have succeeded in calling attention to the importance of this boundary question, our object in drawing attention to Captain Colomb's clever paper has been gained.

"THE NATAL COLONIST,"

May 27, 1874.

By a recent mail we were favoured with the receipt of a copy of an admirable paper read before the Royal Colonial Institute, on the subject of Colonial Defence, by Captain J. C. R. Colomb, late Royal Marine Artillery. Accompanying the paper was a circular from the gallant officer named, bearing a recent date, and in which he makes some observations, from which we cannot do better than make the following extracts:—

"It is a subject which of late years has been treated either with apathy or neglect by the Imperial Government, but it is one of vast importance to the mother country, and to every portion of our Empire—no matter how fragmentary or how far removed by distance.

"It was excluded from all consideration in the reorganisation of of naval and military forces by our late Government, and there is some reason to fear that, owing to a want of knowledge of the broader principles of modern warfare, a consideration of this grave question may be postponed until it is too late.

"National defence has, in the mother country, turned on a narrow pivot of provision for the protection of the lives and property of Her Majesty's subjects at home, to the total exclusion of all consideration for those abroad. It only needs visible danger to prove that true defence must be Imperial, and not national, and that if we are to maintain our position as an Empire, we must be prepared to defend it as a whole. This may be accepted as truth, but it must not be forgotten, if we really mean to act upon it, that peace affords the only opportunity of husbanding and developing our Imperial resources. He who would trace to its true source the glory and stability of the German Empire must not seek for the cause in the brilliant victories and dazzling successes of its army during the Franco-German war, but will find it only in the careful, painstaking working out of well-known principles of policy and the military art, in the quiet, silent years of peace which preceded it. One was the effect; the other was the cause. I happen to know that Colonial Defence has been treated as something outside the question of army and navy reorganisation, because eminent authorities at home consider Colonial feeling has not been as yet sufficiently pronounced to warrant more decided action in the matter."

From these observations the general drift of Captain Colomb's paper may be gathered. His object, in a word, is to arouse the Empire to a practical recognition of the fact that England and all her dependencies and Colonies are one.

The late Government has often been accused of the design of dismembering "The Empire," and even those who would not go quite so far as to charge them with any such active purpose have imputed to them a culpable indifference as to the maintenance of its integrity. Captain Colomb apparently regards the advent of a Conservative Ministry to power as a suitable opportunity for urging his opinions anew, and it is with much pleasure that we shall afford our readers the opportunity of judging for themselves, so far as our space will allow, at once what these opinions are, and of the practical measures he recommends for giving them effect.

We cannot admit the soundness or justice of a claim very generally put forth on behalf of the Tories, or their modern representatives the Conservatives, of being *par excellence* the patrons and

guardians of the Colonial possessions of the Crown. If it be true that some of the chief and ablest maintainers of the proposition that the Colonies are a danger to and a drag upon the mother country have belonged to the school of politicians who style themselves Liberal, it is no less true that the chief oppressors of the Colonies among home politicians have been found among the ranks of those to whom we are now taught to look for support in the assertion of our constitutional rights as Englishmen and as Colonists, and for the maintenance of our connection with the mother country. We need not spend time in arguing a point which is not of the greatest practical importance to us, though by way of moderating the assertion of unjust claims, we may remind those who are inclined thus to boast that it was in the days of the old Tory ascendancy that the American Colonies were first driven into rebellion, and the bond that united them to the mother country was cut with the sword. One real danger which we as Colonists have to guard against is that of being deceived or beguiled by names; of trusting to Whig or Tory, to Liberal or Conservative. Mr. Disraeli's former Ministry, as Mr. Gladstone's late one, alike supported the representative of the Crown in his unconstitutional usurpation of popular rights, and if it was a "Liberal" Secretary of State who in plain words recognised that we had been "in our rights" throughout the long contest it was the same "Liberal" Minister who himself attempted to fasten upon our necks the yoke of a charter which gave the lie to his profession of leaving the Colonists to manage their own affairs. These reflections may seem to be somewhat beside the question of Colonial Defence, but may be pardoned if they tend to prevent any from placing too much faith in mere party names or cries.

In returning to Captain Colomb's paper, we must guard at the outset against the misconception of his being supposed to refer in any but the slightest way to that kind of defence to which the minds of our fellow-Colonists most naturally revert at the mention of the word—defence against attack by the natives within our borders or around us. The Colonial defence of which Captain Colomb treats is a defence of the Colonies against the attacks of the enemies of the British Empire upon them as integral parts of that Empire, or rather upon that Empire through them. If, therefore, with wars and rumours of war in the midst of and around us, readers may be inclined to regard the paper as but of little interest for them, we would remind them that the other question—that to which Captain Colomb addresses himself—can never be without interest for us, and that the more highly we prize our Colony for

its own internal riches or productiveness, or as the inlet and outlet of a rich interior, the more must we also regard it as offering a point of attack to the enemies of England. Our sugar-fields or our sheepwalks may offer no great bait to the cupidity of the future enemy of England, be he German, or Russ, or Yankee, or what he will, but if our coalfields are what we are so fondly led to hope; if our port is to make Natal the main, and at once a direct and healthy highway to the exhaustless diamond and perhaps still richer gold fields of the interior, then in proportion to these advantages will be the temptation she will present to make her a point of attack. The "inexhaustible fields of excellent coal," of which we have heard so much, but whose existence remains as uncertain as it was when the late Sir R. Murchison urged us to have out a thorough mining engineer;—these coalfields, if their existence were established beyond doubt or question, would of themselves make Natal a most desirable possession to any Power who in future years may go to war with Great Britain. There is, happily, no present reason to fear such a calamity, but even a young man may remember how suddenly the clouds of war appear, and gather, and fill the heavens, and none can tell how soon England may be embroiled, as France and Germany were but the other day. Let Natal then gain her desire; let her come to be regarded as a coaling station for the shipping in these seas; let her be made the highway to the diamond and the gold fields of South Africa, and she will become the mark for the assaults of enemies, for England's sake and her own, from which, were war raging at this moment, her present poverty and insignificance would give her immunity. So much by way of showing that our interest in the question discussed by Captain Colomb is greater and more real than many may have been in the habit of regarding it.

Captain Colomb at all events merits the gratitude of all Colonists for the earnest and able way in which he vindicates their claims to the attention and the care of England as being integral parts of the Empire. His whole paper, in fact, may be regarded as an appeal to England to realise the fact that her Colonies are the members of a body of which she is the head; that attacks upon them are attacks upon her; that, in short, to use his own words, to suppose that defence of the United Kingdom against invasion is "the one thing needful in the matter of national defence, is a grievous error." This is the error he sets himself to combat, and this done he proceeds to show how the integrity of the Empire is to be maintained inviolate by treating the mother country and her dependencies strictly as one, and guarding her at every possible

point from assault. How he proposes to do this we must leave to another occasion, contenting ourselves for the present with these preliminary observations by way of inviting the reader's attention to the subject.

"THE TIMES OF NATAL, AND AGRICULTURAL CHRONICLE."

Wednesday, June 24, 1874.

We received some time since a paper on "Colonial Defence," by Captain Colomb, which was read nearly a year ago before the Royal Colonial Institute, at the annual meeting.

To our ears, the title hardly conveys a correct idea of the subject matter; which is really the suggestion of a system by which the whole British Empire may be made secure against hostile attack; or, at least, be placed in a state of thorough preparation for resisting invasion.

It is cheering, after the narrow and selfish views which have been of late years, not only unblushingly advocated, but almost established as political axioms in England, to hear Englishmen once again extending their sympathies, so long contracted within the silver streak; once more recognising the fact of a British Empire; once more awake to the principle of union, as absolutely necessary for defence.

Under the present Government, we may reasonably hope that the reaction which appears to have set in will increase in force and volume; and it is with this hope that we, in this neglected corner of the world, presume to add our feeble voice to the chorus which must soon swell up from all quarters of the globe, where men live under the English flag, and speak of England as home. A chorus of men crying for the renewal of the old home-ties, so rudely broken in some cases, so cruelly strained in others; for the framing of new bonds of union, bound on better principles than those which have now either ceased to exercise any binding power or threaten imminent rupture for the consolidation of the great British Empire, rather than centralisation into one great whole; in other words, for the combination of the whole strength of England and her Colonies to secure the defence of their territory, and the protection of their commerce.

Captain Colomb very justly remarks, that hitherto the defence of the Empire has been conducted, at different times, upon two opposite principles, representing the extreme views on opposite sides of

the question. One, that which prevailed at the close of the Peninsular War, and against which the great Duke, then in his seventy-eighth year, remonstrated in vain, viz. the principle of "scattering the armies and fleets of the mother country over the face of the globe, while the United Kingdom (the Imperial base of operations) was left destitute of any power of resistance. The other, that which is openly avowed by some who are called "advanced thinkers" of the present day; that which has given a character to the policy of the late Government, viz. that of confining defensive measures to the protection of Great Britain and Ireland, and rendering the soil of the British Isle secure, while "her vast Colonial Empire, her extended commerce, her interests in every quarter of the globe," are left to the mercy of an enemy, who, in attacking the Empire, would naturally prefer "cutting our unprotected communications, and appropriating our undefended Colonies and possessions, to a direct assault upon a small island bristling with bayonets." "Our Imperial eagle," says the writer, "whose wings covereth seas, buries her head in the sands of the defended shores of England, and, blinding her vision of danger with a few men, guns, volunteer reviews, and Autumn Manœuvres, her statesmen bid her believe she is safe!"

These two principles Captain Colomb terms the Scylla and Charybdis of the question; and his object is to show the true course between them which the Empire may safely steer. He contends that Great Britain has less reason to fear invasion than investment; and that, when the former becomes possible, the latter is a certainty; *i.e.* that whenever Great Britain loses the command of the Channel waters, the Imperial lines of communication will be cut off; and that the heart of the Empire, thus cut off from its sources of supply, must cease to beat. That the first line of defence should be the Channel, to secure the Colonies from being locked out from the mother country; and that there, and in the Mediterranean, the largest naval force should be maintained. This he terms the frontier of Colonial Defence.

But beyond this, he strongly recommends that all the Imperial lines of communication, which he describes and enumerates, should be protected; 1st, by a special class of cruisers, adapted to the special service and capable of keeping at sea for a long time. 2nd, by the maintanence of a sufficient military force at the several points or bases which command them; so that while the navy does the skirmishing or patrolling, the army may secure its bases or arsenals.

Captain Colomb then fixes on certain points, on each of the great

lines, as stations where such military force should be maintained; and on this subject enters too much into detail for us to follow him at present.

It will interest our readers, however, to be informed, that of the Imperial roads, the one we know best as the P. & O. line is stated to present the greatest difficulties, owing principally to our having no control over the most commanding portion—the Isthmus of Suez. This defect, at a point of such immense importance, points to the absolute necessity to the Empire of having a commanding and strongly defended great naval arsenal in the Eastern hemisphere; as it would not be safe to calculate upon the resources of Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Chatham for the supply of our war fleets throughout the world; while it would be still more absurd to rely upon private firms for maintaining them in efficiency at a distance at from 6,000 to 10,000 miles.

The site of this reserve naval arsenal is left open to future consideration; but, while on climatic grounds an Australian port is suggested, the writer lays stress on the strategic importance of Bombay. Natal is altogether passed over, though it would seem to combine many of the requisite qualities: notably, a healthy climate, a large harbour, with natural capabilities requiring only skill and capital for their full development; an almost unlimited supply of coal, and a position which would render it available for the Cape line to Australia, as well as for that by the Red Sea. It is, of course, out of the line between Aden and Cape Comorin; but not much more distant than are the Fiji Islands from the line between Australia and Vancouver's Island; and they are cited as giving a commanding position. The control, too, which the selection of Natal as an arsenal would give to England along the whole line of the Eastern Coast of Africa, the utter check-mate it would give to the slave trade; the immense impetus that it would add to the progress of civilisation in the interior; and more than all, the stability it would give to British rule throughout South Africa,—all these are points well worthy of consideration, and which when the time arrives, will, we trust, be strongly represented in the proper quarter by our Government.

Captain Colomb lays peculiar stress upon the selection of the coaling stations of the Empire, and upon the necessity of their being under our own control. But for the placid indifference and general supineness of our benighted Government in days past, it would long ago have been widely known how eminently Natal is fitted for this purpose; and she would not, in such a paper as this, have been passed over in silence.

"While we congratulate ourselves," continues Captain Colomb, "that even the stores of coal needed for marine locomotion are principally ours, we must remember that they are ours so long as we protect them from destruction by bombardment, or from capture by assault. It is therefore of paramount importance that our coal depôts along the Imperial lines should be efficiently and thoroughly defended; that they should not be selected at haphazard, or situated at places in the possession of any foreign power when it can possibly be avoided."

If, as there is every reason to be assured, the upper part of Natal, the Free State, and Transvaal, and, in all probability, a large portion of the Zulu country, abound with coal; if it is probable that all these countries must, at no distant date, owe allegiance to England; and if the present Government, as may be fairly expected from their avowed principles, support and inaugurate some such scheme as that suggested in the paper before us, we are surely indulging in no wild dream when we confidently look forward to the selection of Natal as one of the Eastern depôts—if we hope to see our port enlarged and improved, thronged by merchantmen, and protected by regular defence vessels and torpedoes.

We need not say that the plan suggested is based on the presumption that the Colonies, being interested in keeping open the Imperial roads, would contribute towards the cost; that it contemplates a system of mutual co-operation between Great Britain and her Colonies; that it pre-supposes Federation, or the consolidation of provinces or small Colonies into Territories or Dominions; or that it leads almost inevitably to that great Confederacy of the whole Empire which some may deem chimerical, but which we firmly believe to be the only real solution of the anomalous relations now existing between the Colonies and the mother country.

Captain Colomb's concluding remarks are worth transcribing. He says: "The mother country has put her own construction on the word 'home,' in applying the principle of calling into existence military forces which can only be used to put up her shop shutters, and to bar her doors. She calls on her children to adopt her definition of its meaning, and to follow her example, and some of them have done so. But who among the armies thus organised, for what she is pleased to call 'home defence,' can determine the exact distance from a man's home at which the obligation ends? Who can draw the magic circle which is to include the territorial area of his duty to die for his country? Home is something more than an abstract idea having reference only to locality; its foundations are laid in common interests, sympathy, affection. A 'silver streak

of sea' cannot divide those interests, nor can miles of oceans sever the strong ties of affection and sympathy. Hence it is that, from whatever quarter of the Empire a cry for help comes—wherever the British flag waves over Englishmen struggling on their own ground for all they hold dear—it is there our home is in danger, there is the rallying-point of forces created in its defence. While we boast of armed hosts here and in the Colonies, whose proud motto is 'home defence,' they must 'survey the Empire' to 'behold our home.'"

These words are golden; and we are sure that our readers will require no apology for the long extract.

It is evident, however, that the Government needs—we might perhaps say, courts—pressure from the Colonies in this direction. The President of the Royal Colonial Institute, in the few observations made by him at the close of the lecture, used these remarkable words: "He feared that the House of Commons was too restricted in its policy and measures to look at so wide a question as this. He thought they must look to the Colonies to get this policy adopted and enforced. They should not rest satisfied until Federation had been achieved; and then the Colonies should insist upon their right in mutually contributing to the defence of the Empire; and after this was done, in controlling the disposition of the forces they had helped to maintain."

We have no doubt that Natal is willing and eager to raise her voice in so great a cause, and to take her part in the great Confederacy. But Natal, with her handful of inhabitants, with the overwhelming pressure of a vast savage population weighing down her energies and crippling her resources, has no audible voice to raise, no aid to proffer.

Far different would be the voice of united South Africa; of a nation extending from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, from the tropics far into the Southern Sea. Her appeal would carry the weight of a British dependency perhaps more deeply interested than any in the preservation of the British Empire; more exposed to hostile attacks, because lying midway on one of the chief highways between England and her more distant possessions. Let us hasten, then, to claim a part in this great work; first throwing aside the leading-strings which cramp our action; then multiplying our strength by a close union with the southern continent, of which we form a part; lastly, by urging in the Council of a great Federation such a policy as the paper before us indicates.

The cry will soon be raised by other Colonies; will, ere long, swell into a universal chorus; let us, though one of the smallest

and weakest, not be the last of the great British family to claim our share in this noble and patriotic scheme.

It was the mouse that, by steady perseverance, gnawed through the ropes that bound the lion; the task to rouse a country sunk in sloth and selfishness may be equally difficult and tedious, but is equally feasible, while time and circumstances seem to favour the attempt.

We must reap honour; we cannot fail to secure some substantial benefit; we may find our share in this great scheme to be such as, in our wildest dreams, we have never anticipated.

We believe that Captain Colomb intends bringing the subject of his paper before Parliament during the present session; and in that case, its reception will enable us to judge of the probability of a changed policy. Meanwhile we heartily trust, that from every British Colony, and from pens more influential than ours, he will receive that support and encouragement which he thoroughly deserves.

"THE NATAL MERCURY,"

June 30, 1874.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE NATAL MERCURY."

SIR,—Your Maritzburg contemporary, the *Times* of Natal, in a late issue has a lengthy leader criticising Captain Colomb's paper on "Colonial Defence." Has the editor any idea of the rank of a captain in the Royal Navy?* If he has, he would never speak of that gallant officer as "Mr. Colomb:" he might as well say "Mr. Durnford." But the great complaint in the above article is the manifest injustice done to Natal and her harbour by passing over such a central position, and giving preference to such insignificant, out-of-the-way harbours as Bombay and the Australian ports. Has the editor ever seen a first-class harbour or an ironclad? Is he aware that one of the smallest sea-going armoured cruisers, such as the *Pallas*, let alone the *Ocean* or the Chinese station flag-ship, would be like a "bull in a china-shop" in this puddle called Port Natal? Does he think for a moment of the vast expense of deepening a sufficient expanse of water large enough to moor a squadron of ironclads and wooden vessels, all of them as large as the R.M.S. *Danube*, to an average depth of thirty feet, as the ships require on the average twenty-five feet to float in, without thinking of the difficulty of making large dry docks, to repair such ships in?

* Mr. Bellville, while pointing out an error, has fallen into a similar one. It is a small matter what inaccuracy occurs on such a point, but the author referred to is a Captain R.M.A., *not* R.N.

Is he aware that Bombay harbour is over ten miles long and three to four broad, with large private and Government dry docks, and well protected? That Port Philip is fifty miles by forty miles, with a narrow and easily-protected entrance and every other advantage? That Port Jackson has in its several arms a length of nearly thirty miles, with an average breadth of two miles, with dry docks, and coal mines only some fifty miles to the north, close to the sea? Has he ever heard of Trincomalee, with its deep-water and spacious land-locked basin? Does he think that these splendid harbours are to be put aside for Natal, with her bare two square miles of deep water, the probability of her railway being made some day, and coal brought to the coast?

No; Natal may have her use even in Imperial designs, but it will never be that of a great naval arsenal. If it were not for its unhealthiness, Delagoa Bay would be far preferable, as there, there is a good harbour, and close proximity to the coal and iron fields of South Africa.

Hoping that this may tend to enlighten your contemporary,
Yours, &c., ALFRED BELLVILLE, F.R.G.S.

Durban, June 26, 1874.

"THE TIMES OF NATAL,"

July 8, 1874.

WE scarcely know whether we feel more elated or depressed by the rebuke administered to us by Mr. Alfred Belleville in a late issue of the *Natal Mercury*. On the whole, perhaps, the feeling of elation predominates, though somewhat counterbalanced by a due sense of our inferiority. For a poor Colonist to be instructed by such an august personage, not only in nautical and geographical details, but in the social grammar, is an honour almost overwhelming, while it affords a happy instance of the condescension in which great men sometimes indulge. With such a Mentor at our side, we might almost overcome our natural modesty, and venture upon the audacity of addressing either of the two illustrious officers placed so aptly in juxtaposition by Mr. Belleville, without fear of committing a social solecism, or exposing our undoubted rusticity.

But as Mr. Belleville's entire letter is an interrogation, or rather a series of interrogations, and as we are content to sit at the feet of this Gamaliel for the nonce, we will answer his questions as best we may.

We have never seen the harbours of which he speaks, nor have we had the opportunity of measuring or sounding them; nor, referring to our article, can we discover that we have termed them "insignificant" or "out of the way." Perhaps, however, Halifax, with the Bedford basin, New York, and San Francisco, will do as well for samples as Bombay, Port Philip, and Port Jackson. With regard to our own little "puddle," as Mr. Belleville contemptuously calls Port Natal, we are not quite alone in believing that its capabilities may be very largely increased; and that there is no Utopianism in the anticipation that, though not perhaps as a "great naval arsenal," yet as a point of some importance in the Imperial lines of communication, it may have its use in the design so ably sketched by Captain Colomb, who, had we criticised his paper in the same tone and spirit which characterise the letter in the *Mercury*, might possibly conceive the impression that whatever our ignorance on nautical and social matters may be, we were at all events uninstructed in the old motto "manners maketh a man."

We are surprised that the writer did not, in pity to Colonial ignorance, print his adnomen in full; for want of a glossary, its meaning is, of course, among the mysteries of Ceres to us.

We have written this, we trust, in a very proper spirit of humility; but we cannot avoid this concluding remark, viz. that if we were as great and important a personage as Mr. Belleville, we would seek "a foeman worthy of our steel;" and not waste such power of sarcasm, such a fund of knowledge, so much authoritative assertion, and so many notes of interrogation, in the fruitless attempt to "enlighten" the obscure editor of a Colonial newspaper.

C. B.

"THE DAILY PRESS,"

HONGKONG, *May* 1, 1874.

WE have received a copy of a very valuable paper upon the important subject of Colonial Defence, which was read by Captain Colomb before the Royal Colonial Institute, the Duke of Manchester in the chair. The paper is written in a clear and masterly style, and gives evidence of very careful and mature thought. Captain Colomb raises his voice against the mistaken idea that the defence of Great Britain and Ireland against invasion is all that is necessary for the security of the British Empire. The key-note to his essay may be found in a single sentence, which he used in speaking on the same subject on a previous occasion: "The defence of the

United Kingdom against invasion is an object of primary importance, but to suppose that this is the one thing needful in the matter of national defence is a grievous error. We are bound to look to the general welfare of the Empire. The sources of our greatness are the possession of India and our commercial prosperity. Our commercial prosperity is in direct proportion to the freedom with which we can carry on trade with our Colonies and other countries. Commerce is, in fact, the link that binds together the several interests of the scattered territories comprising the Empire." Captain Colomb urges, therefore, that before the question of military reorganisation was practically dealt with, it was the duty of statesmen to cast their eyes beyond the shores of Mr. Gladstone's "Happy England," and his "streak of silver sea."

The author gives a vivid description of the defenceless condition in which the majority of the British Colonies would find themselves in the event of war with a power possessing a large navy; and bases his arguments upon the fundamental principle that the success of all operations of war, whether defensive or offensive, depends upon the disposition of force in such a manner as will best secure the base of operations, and ensure safety and freedom of communication. To Great Britain it is, therefore, of vital importance to secure the great sea lines of communication between the different parts of her Empire, and he especially urges the necessity of being careful not to neglect this precaution on the more distant seas where, for the protection of such lines, a special class of cruisers capable of keeping at sea for long periods is required, the strength of this patrolling force on each line being in proportion to the value of the line, and to the force against which it may have to contend. Captain Colomb points out that it would not meet the end in view to leave the naval force alone responsible for the protection of such stations, and quotes a statement of Sir John Burgoyne on the subject, to the effect that "under such a system a small squadron, with 3,000 or 4,000 troops in Eastern seas in time of war, would take the Mauritius and Hongkong, and destroy the naval arsenal and means at Trincomalee, if it did not capture the whole island of Ceylon."

That this is not an exaggeration of the danger that would be incurred will be readily believed from the fact that when the last great war broke out on the continent, and it was rumoured that England would be involved in it, the question as to the safety of Hongkong was discussed here with anxiety, as, small though this colony is, it would be a most important blow to British *prestige* in the whole of China, and as a necessary consequence also in India,

were it captured even for a short period by a foreign power; and the evil effects which would be thus produced might be an object in time of war. In Hongkong, a regiment is stationed, and there are usually a fair number of men-of-war on the station; but if hostilities broke out at home the naval forces might possibly be reduced even further than they have been by the retrenching policy of the Government of late years, and the danger above indicated be incurred. This colony pays a military contribution of £20,000, which has not unjustly been objected to, because the forces are stationed here as much in the general interest of Great Britain in China as in those of Hongkong, and the amount is very heavy for so small a colony. Captain Colomb suggests that a general and enlarged scheme for the defence of the sea communications of the Empire can only be made by the Colonies co-operating, and one of the first things that would have to be done would be to adjust the contributions from the different Colonies upon a well-considered and equitable basis. At present, these contributions are levied capriciously, and frequently cause much discontent; but there can be little doubt that the Colonies for the most part would willingly contribute towards the general defence of the Empire if, in return, they had some voice in the government; and it would be a good adjunct towards the consummation of such a policy as Captain Colomb agitates that some measures for the representation of the Colonies in the Imperial Parliament were taken.

To return, however, to the scheme itself. The author of the paper urges that such considerations as are above sketched out point to the absolute necessity of having a commanding and strongly defended great naval arsenal in the Eastern hemisphere; and with regard to the site to be chosen, he points to the strategic importance of Bombay; but considers that the most commanding position would be the Fiji Islands. At the time he wrote, these Islands had not been annexed, but we learn since by telegram that this has been done; and it is to be hoped that the reason which [illegible] advances will induce the home Government to make use of ultimately in the manner he suggests.

In Hongkong, we are more inclined to look upon the question of naval and military defence chiefly as it affects our general position in China; and it is satisfactory to find that thoughtful and competent men are directing attention to the question of defence abroad in its largest aspects. The moral effects of the adoption of such a system as is foreshadowed by Captain Colomb in our dealings with such countries as China would be immense, as the certainty that

we were always prepared to act would be the greatest security against the outbreak of hostilities.

We notice a very important suggestion which is made in the paper, but which, as it is of too wide a bearing to discuss fully on the present occasion, we give in Captain Colomb's own words. He says :—

"The forces necessary for the defence of the Imperial communications should be under the control of one directing head. As military force is necessary to the support of naval power, and as in our case military force is in its turn dependent upon naval power, the distribution of the one must have reference to that of the other. If, therefore, the military force is under the control of one department, and the naval force under that of another, the defence of our communications is, to use a homely phrase, 'between two stools.' In vain might our 'Admiralty' despatch fleets to distant seas, if the basis of their operations are not secured by the 'War Office;' equally valueless would be the distribution of military force for the protection of those places by the War Office, if the Admiralty did not keep the communications between them open. Unless there be a war minister, responsible for and controlling the general principles which should govern the action of each department, nothing but confusion can result when the Imperial communications are in danger."

The suggestion is a bold one, and it shows the thorough and independent manner in which the writer of the paper has thought out his subject. There is certainly no necessary division between the two services, and if such a fusion as he suggests could be made, it would appear undoubtedly likely to be advantageous in many important respects.

The Duke of Manchester, after the paper had been read, expressed his warm concurrence with the policy which was indicated, and his hope that as the Colonies grew in wealth and strength they would see in what their true interests lay; they should not rest satisfied until Federation had been achieved, and then the Colonies should insist upon their right in mutually contributing to the defence of the Empire, and after this was done, in controlling the disposition of the forces they had helped to maintain. In order to bring about this satisfactory result, however, it will be necessary to carefully reconsider the whole of our Colonial administration, and to inaugurate a policy of such a character as will substantially incorporate the Colonies into the Empire as an integral part of it; and to attain this end the first step would seem to be some plan by which their voice may be heard in the Imperial Legislature.

In conclusion, we heartily recommend Captain Colomb's paper to the perusal of all interested in the very important subject which it treats. It is the production of an eminently astute and observant mind, and is suggestive of much valuable thought to the general reader as well as to those specially interested in naval and military matters.

"OVERLAND CHINA MAIL,"

May 9, 1874.

The question of Colonial Defence can scarcely fail to be one of considerable importance to most of our readers, and as many of them may not be as fortunate as ourselves in receiving a copy of the paper treating of this subject, read by Captain Colomb before the Royal Colonial Institute in June last, we shall perhaps be excused if we refer to the pamphlet at some little length. For ourselves, we only regret that want of space will not allow of us giving Captain Colomb's tract as much notice as it deserves. The paper is written in an unlaboured style, but the reader can at once see that the subject has been most thoroughly thought out by the able writer, and that in putting the matter before the public in such a clear and lucid manner, he has performed a task by no means easy. It opens by a statement for which all, we think, will admit there are sufficient grounds: that "Colonial Defence" can no more be considered an abstract question than can "National Defence" be taken to mean simply the defence of the United Kingdom. The author reminds his hearers of the fact that although England with her Colonies is a giant among nations, without them she would be but a dwarf; and he then goes on to point out that it is necessary not simply to protect the heart of the giant, but also to so protect the remainder of his body that the arteries and veins may be kept open for the egress and ingress of commerce. As Captain Colomb says, he was one of the first to advocate the withdrawal of a few troops quartered in certain Colonies and possessions where they were quite insufficient as a protection; but he did not, in thus arguing, propose to leave the question of the defence of our Colonies and possessions altogether in the air, as it has been. What he then said was, that the defence of the capital was of primary importance, as the heart is the most vital point, but he did not intend that the work of protection should end there. The thorough defence of the British Islands may be sufficient to keep us alive as a nation; but if we

wish to be prosperous we must look further than that, and see that our commerce is properly protected. Commerce is in fact, as the writer of the pamphlet before us says, "the link that binds together the several interests of the scattered territories comprising the Empire." Captain Colomb urges very strongly the possibility of investment, and reminded his hearers at the Royal Colonial Institute that investment, practically, consists of the loss, temporary or permanent, of the command of the waters surrounding the British Islands. This can only be done by cutting our Imperial lines, which are considered by him to be to British North America, the West Indies, and to Australasia and the Pacific round Cape Horn on the one hand, and to India, China, and Australasia (either by the Canal or round the Cape of Good Hope) on the other. All these lines, of course, radiate from the waters surrounding the British Islands, and it is perfectly evident that, supposing them once to be cut by a hostile force, Great Britain would be invested. The prevention of this *contretemps* is, in the opinion of Captain Colomb, the great thing to be guarded against, and the question of "Colonial Defence" is shown to be one intimately connected with the carrying out of this most desirable end. The writer of the pamphlet insists, and we think quite rightly, that whereas in the defence of land communications a purely military force only is required, in the defence of the sea lines both a purely military and a purely naval force is required. The Navy furnishes the patrolling or skirmishing force, while the Army secures to it its bases or arsenals. To leave the naval force responsible for the protection of its base would, he observes, be to tie its hands. It would be "using the fleet to maintain its arsenals, instead of the arsenals to maintain the fleet." Some years ago, a governor of an Eastern Colony proposed to leave such places almost exclusively to naval protection, and the late Sir John Burgoyne thus speaks of the value of the proposition: "Under the system proposed, a small squadron, with 3,000 or 4,000 troops in Eastern seas in time of war, would take the Mauritius and Hongkong, and destroy the naval arsenal and means of Trincomalee, if it did not capture the whole island of Ceylon." Of the Imperial lines, of which our readers are probably most interested, he thus speaks of that to India, the East, and Australasia by the Mediterranean:—

"The points here are Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, Bombay, Cape Comorin, and King George's Sound on the main line, with Trincomalee, Singapore, and Hongkong on its northern branch.

"Of all the Imperial roads this is the most difficult to defend,

owing to its want of continuity. The most commanding position—the Isthmus of Suez—is not in our possession. Here our line can be most easily cut, and here we have least power to prevent the contingency. So long as the canal is neutral, or in the hands of a neutral power, so long is it at the disposal of friend and foe alike. Were it in the hands of our enemies, it is only open to them and not to us. To make this line safe, the occupation by military force of the Isthmus might, under certain conditions, be a necessity. Are we prepared for that? . . . .

"Supposing it to be neutral, it must be remembered that if purely naval power cannot be entirely relied on for the local protection of our outposts, neither can it be relied on to prevent the entry into the Nile of vessels of our enemy, and once there they would have the whole of our Eastern possessions at their mercy, unless we have a force sufficient to blockade the Red Sea."

What, then, would be absolutely necessary supposing a hostile fleet were once to obtain the position here pointed out? All British Possessions to the east of Suez must either be self-supporting, or they must be able to obtain ample means of supply and repair from home round the Cape. As to the latter means of obtaining assistance, long before it could be rendered by a home fleet, the whole of our Eastern Colonies would probably have fallen into the enemy's hands, and supposing the home resources were cut off, say by a hostile fleet cutting the Imperial lines, at the point of convergence in the waters round Great Britain, what possible means have our Eastern Colonies of protection? Were such a thing to happen at the present moment, there is little doubt but that we might be stripped of every small possession this side of Africa. India would in all probability be able to prevent actual capture until relief could be obtained, but Trincomalee, Mauritius, Singapore, Penang, and Hongkong, would all be in the hands of the enemy. And supposing the enemy to be Russia or some other power having Eastern possessions, from which she could draw a sufficiently large force to hold the places of which she had obtained possession, we might find it no easy job to regain our former occupancy. Captain Colomb then considers that all along our chain of possessions we ought to establish coaling stations, that is, places well defended by a purely military power, and well provided with munitions of war of every sort likely to be necessary for the refitting of a fleet. These stations ought also to contain dockyards, having docks in which the largest ocean ironclad could be placed, and thoroughly well supplied with every material necessary for the repair, if not even perhaps the building, of a fleet. The Fijis are

spoken of as being admirably situated for the purpose, and as they are now in our possession, we hope to some day see Captain Colomb's suggestions with regard to them carried out; but we should fancy that places a little nearer to the line of commerce would probably offer better conditions for the trial of the experiment. To speak a little more plainly, would not the Straits or Hongkong make a better coaling station than a cluster of Islands some distance from all ordinary steamer routes, except that between Australia and America? In putting forward the prior claims of places in the ordinary track of the P. and O. we by no means wish to decry the value of our new acquisition in the Pacific. But while perfectly ready to admit the desirability of making the Fiji Islands the coaling station of the Pacific, we cannot help thinking that another one at least is wanted between this and the Red Sea. Whether it should be at the Mauritius, Ceylon, Singapore, or Hongkong, we should not like to say; but we maintain that until all these places are sufficiently strong to protect themselves from being taken by the first man-of-war despatched for that purpose, things will not be as they should. That at the present day a single frigate could take this place in the absence of our men-of-war there is little doubt. We are now without a single fortification that could prevent an enemy's ship entering the harbour at either end, and were war to break out to-morrow, a single ship belonging to the enemy could run through the harbour and so damage our naval and military stores, &c. that before we could fire a shot in return we should find ourselves defenceless. Our powder magazine here is is so exposed, that it might easily be knocked to pieces by shots fired from the water, and a few shells thrown into the city would, we doubt not, soon convince the powers that be that the wisest course would be to submit. This is hardly as it should be. Whether or not this is to be the coaling station of the East, is not the question we are now raising. What we say is, that every place of such commercial importance as Hongkong should be properly fortified, and so fortified that, in the absence of a defending fleet, the enemy would find it no easy job to obtain a good position in front of the city for placing his guns.

What we have said as regards Hongkong would probably apply in a greater or less degree to all ports of call between here and Suez; and although we can hardly be expected to take as much interest in the protection of other places as in this, yet we doubt not their inhabitants would gladly join with ours in making such a representation to Parliament, as will convince them of the facts that we are in no way protected, and that for the interests of the

British Isles it is necessary that we should be. As to the question of cost, we must defer that to another time, when we hope to be able to point out the way in which it should be divided amongst the colonists and those living at home.

"THE WEST INDIAN,"

April 2, 1874.

In a paper read at the Colonial Institute, London, on 28th June last, published in the *European Mail*, Captain Colomb insists on the defence of the British Colonies as an essential part of the defence of the British Empire. Referring to a former statement of his concerning the distribution of our "War Forces," made in a lecture at the United Service Institution, he says :—

"The defence of the United Kingdom against invasion is an object of primary importance ; but to suppose that this is the one thing needful in the matter of national defence is a grievous error. We are bound to look to the general welfare of the Empire. The sources of our greatness are the possession of India, and our commercial prosperity. Our commercial prosperity is in direct proportion to the freedom with which we can carry on trade with our Colonies and other countries. Commerce is, in fact, the link that binds together the several interests of the scattered territories comprising the Empire. . . . Bearing this in mind, let us suppose that the view which limits national defence to the protection of Great Britain and Ireland against invasion be practically adopted, and that the whole resources of the country have been wholly and exclusively directed to rendering the soil of the British Isles secure, and that this object has been fully attained, what would our position be in time of aggressive war, on the part of one or more great powers? Does it not stand to reason that, as the object of all aggressive war is either to acquire territory, or to weaken, if not destroy the power of the nation against which war is made, the easiest and the safest mode is adopted to carry out these objects : under the circumstances we have supposed, therefore, an enemy would naturally confine his efforts to destroying our commerce and our power in India, leaving the British Isles to watch his proceeding with impotent dismay.

"If the heart and citadel of the Empire is alone protected, will it 'surprise us to hear' that when the Empire is attacked, our enemy prefers cutting our unprotected communications, and appro-

priating our undefended Colonies and possessions to a direct assault upon a 'small island bristling with bayonets'"?

In elucidation of this argument, that in any system of National Defence must necessarily be comprised provision for Colonial Defence, and keeping open the communication between the mother country and her Colonies, Captain Colomb proceeds to describe the British Empire as consisting of ten groups of territory spread over the world at long sea distances, viz. the British Islands, British North America, the West Indies, the West Coast of Africa, the Cape, the Mauritius, Australia, Hongkong, the Straits Settlements, and India.

The United Kingdom being considered as the Imperial base, the lines of communication to be kept open are—

1. To British North America across the North Atlantic.
2. To the West Indies.
3. To India, China, and Australasia by the Mediterranean.
4. To India, China, and Australasia round the Cape.
5. From Australasia and the Pacific round Cape Horn.

An enemy at war with England might proceed directly by invasion, or, indirectly, by cutting the lines of communication with her Colonies and destroying her commerce, the chief source of her wealth. As an illustration, Captain Colomb refers to the late war between France and Germany, when we saw, "first of all, an attack upon the advanced positions on the lines of communication; next, the cutting of the lines; and, lastly, as an inevitable consequence, Paris fell." The close of the Peloponnesian war by the fall of Athens as related in Grecian History, accomplished first by the destruction of her navy in the harbour of Syracuse, the alienation of her allies and dependencies in the Ægean Sea, the ruin of her commerce and burning of her ships in the Hellespont, preparatory to the investment and capture of the city, affords another equally convincing illustration of the argument.

"Consider," says Captain Colomb, "for one moment on what the presumption of possible invasion rests. It rests on this—the loss, temporary or permanent, of the command of the waters surrounding the British Islands. But remember that the lines of communication all radiate from these waters: the loss, therefore, of our command here cuts every one of the Imperial lines; and what is this but investment?"

This was just what the great Napoleon waited for in 1805, with his army at Boulogne ready to cross the Channel, if the fleet had come up in time to cover the landing of the troops. The invasion was prevented by the fleet being intercepted and destroyed

at Trafalgar. The same thing occurred in 1588, when the Prince of Parma had his army also ready in the Flemish ports for the invasion of England, on the appearance of the Armada in the Channel; and historians express little doubt of the conquest of England by the Prince, but for the violence of the weather and the dispersion of the fleet. Since then England has grown up to be the greatest maritime power in the world, through her commerce and Colonies, quite as much as by the prowess of her arms.

One main cause of her success is that pointed out by Captain Colomb—her command of the Channel, which not only secures her lines of communication with her Colonies, but gives her the key of all the ports of Northern and Central Europe from the Baltic to Brest. Let anyone cast his eye upon the map of Europe, and he will see how it has come to pass that a small country like the United Kingdom has obtained maritime supremacy. It is owing to her command of the Channel, and holding such important posts as Gibraltar and Malta in the Mediterranean. Without further reference to the observations of the writer on these lines of communication, we confine ourselves to the second, that to the West Indies, with which we are more particularly concerned. He says of it:—

"Here we have Bermuda, the Bahamas, Jamaica, and Antigua. The strategic value of Bermuda is in some degree understood. The military value of the Bahamas was fixed by Sir John Burgoyne. Jamaica, from its central position and capacious harbour, is of considerable importance. I add Antigua for two reasons—(1) because Jamaica is far too leeward to be of value as a coaling station or arsenal for cruisers acting in the defence of communications to the Eastern Islands; such vessels would burn a great quantity of fuel in steaming up to their station from Jamaica against the trades; (2) vessels bound for the greater Antilles and Gulf of Mexico generally pass between Antigua and Guadaloupe."

Bermuda is a convenient half-way house between Halifax—the terminus of the first line of communication—and the West Indies; and the importance of keeping up the inter-colonial communications is only secondary to that with the mother country. With regard to the Windward and Leeward Islands, we may be naturally biassed in favour of the advantages offered by the situation of Barbados, to windward of all the others, and in a more central position, in considering it to hold a better strategic position than Antigua, with a harbour equally easy of access and as capable of defence, and "affording as safe and commodious shelter" for

ships of war and merchantmen. It is for this reason and its salubrity that it has been made the head-quarters of the troops in the command, and the first port of call for the steamers of the Royal Mail and West India and Pacific lines. It is also in the track of the New York and Brazilian steamers, which pass through Carlisle Bay on their way to and fro, although they only call in when they fall short of coal. The position of Barbados is as favourable as that of Antigua in reference to Jamaica, and more favourable in regard to the growing Colonies of Trinidad and British Guiana, the latter particularly, which is far in excess of any other in the value of her imports and exports, with a power of expansion possessed by none other, limited only by the population. Captain Colomb points out the advantage of having coaling stations on these points, the selection of which should be governed by the following conditions :—

"1. They must be in our possession, and on or near a line of communication. 2. They should possess natural advantages, such as safe and commodious shelter for the war and commercial fleets, easy of access, and capable of defence. They should be as far as possible the natural rendezvous at all times of vessels passing and repassing along the line, and the chief, if not the only, coaling station of the district they command.

"Too much attention cannot be paid to the selection of the coaling stations of the Empire. They should be under our control. Take for example the West Indies. The great coaling station in that district—St. Thomas—is not in our possession. The consequence is, that were we engaged in hostilities in that quarter, a large portion of our force would be necessarily employed in the blockade—so far as our enemy is concerned—of this point, and would be so much deducted from the force available and required for other purposes.

We have confined ourselves to a brief statement of the argument as set forth in Captain Colomb's pamphlet, and propose in a following number to show how it concerns the West Indies—a very inconsiderable portion of the Colonial Empire of Great Britain, but still a part, and occupying a position of equal strategic importance with any other line of communication, as he observes, between North and South America, and commanding the trade of the Southern and Western Atlantic.

"THE WEST INDIAN,"

April 7, 1874.

That the Colonies of England are a main source of her wealth and greatness, we take it is beyond dispute. But from Captain Colomb's pamphlet, it would seem, it has not been sufficiently recognised in the Colonial policy of the late Administration. It is not our intention to discuss this question. What we seek to show is the value of the connection between England and her possessions in the West Indies considered relatively with her connection with India and the other British Colonies. In the first place, the connection with the West Indies dates from an earlier period, and the names of many of the naval heroes of England are associated with their history. But what is of much more importance is their geographical position. In early times a voyage to the Plantations meant a visit to the West Indies, even in the case of vessels with settlers bound for the New England States. The outward voyage was made across the Bay of Biscay to the Spanish coast, and thence to Madeira and Barbados, from which ports a fresh departure was taken *viâ* Bermuda for the New England States. Steam communication has put an end to this round-about course, but in the meantime the commerce of England has extended beyond the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn into the great Southern Ocean, and the track of the ships outward or homeward bound lies just outside of the chain of the Windward and Leeward Islands. These islands have become so many stepping-stones from North America to South America, affording convenient stations for the telegraph wires, which stretch from Demerara to the Havana, and from there to Washington and New York. A lighthouse is being put up on the east coast of Barbados, at the joint expense of the Island Legislature and the Imperial Government, for the benefit of vessels passing to Windward, as well as those bound for Carlisle Bay, or any other West Indian port. The trade between the West Indies and the United States and British North America is only secondary to that with the mother country. They obtain breadstuffs from the former, and lumber and fish from the latter. It is a mutually advantageous trade, and it is increasing every year. With the countries of the southern half of the Continent, with the exception of Guiana, there is but little trade carried on, and that chiefly with the Plate River, since the establishment of the telegraph, of vessels calling here for orders. The position of Barbados to Windward of the chain of the

Antilles, and in the track of vessels from the South Atlantic bound to the States, or to Europe, attaches an importance to it that must increase with the extension of commerce in the Southern Ocean. Another consideration is, the climate of the West Indies: the islands are healthier than the mainland, the settlements upon which are generally at the mouths of great rivers subject to malaria and mosquitoes. The increase of the population of Barbados is due to the greater salubrity of the climate, the abundant water supply, and the facilities for sea-bathing. Barbados supplies a large contingent of labour and population to Demerara every year, and in consequence there is a larger trade carried on between the two than between Barbados and all the others put together. Now, Demerara has unlimited resources; the large sugar estates are all central factories, producing from 1,000 to 2,000 tons of the finest quality sugar. The production at present averages about 100,000 tons, and there is only need of time, capital, and labour, to augment it to a million of tons. It is the most flourishing British Colony in the West Indies. Trinidad is a growing Colony also; and as they lie at the extremity of the chain of islands, the position of Barbados in their neighbourhood, and to Windward of them, gives it additional value as an outpost and a commercial centre. Governor Rawson has directed attention to a further advantage derived from the position of Barbados, as affording the most eligible site for a meteorological observatory, and for the transmission by telegraph all through the islands to Washington, of the changes of weather, and approach of cyclones in the hurricane season, which generally arise in the latitude of Barbados, sweeping across the ocean in a north-westerly direction, by which means timely notice of them might be given to mariners, and precautions taken by vessels in port or about to leave, against the danger.

Reference to statistical returns will show the value of the commerce carried on between Great Britain and her Colonies in the West Indies. On the whole, the value of their imports and exports is about equal. The greater part of the exports go directly to the United Kingdom, and a large portion of the imports, consisting of merchandise and manufactures, is also obtained from there, giving employment to a great number of British ships. It is further to be considered that not only is this profitable trade in the hands of British merchants, but the shareholders of the Colonial and other banks are for the most part Englishmen, as well as the owners of a great number of the sugar estates and other property in the West Indies. It is not too much to say

that nearly one-half of the annual profits of the sugar cultivation of the West Indies, directly or indirectly, goes into the pockets of absentee proprietors residing in the United Kingdom or elsewhere. The West Indies afford a profitable investment for British capital, and a good market for British manufactures. They also give employment to a considerable number of persons sent out from the mother country to fill places in the civil service, and to act as agents and overseers. Many of these, after acquiring wealth, either send their children home to be educated, or return to end their days there with their families, and with the wealth they have accumulated. This is the case more or less with all the Colonies, but applies much more to the Colonies within the tropics than to Canada and Australia, where the climate and flourishing condition of the country are inducements for permanent settlement. British subjects are not all of the same race, as the British Empire extends over all parts of the world. The Queen of England, it has been said, is the greatest Asiatic potentate, and her crown is not less nobly sustained in the Western hemisphere and in South Africa and Australia. The British Empire consists of a number of growing states, which are every year gathering strength and assuming larger dimensions, and the more closely they are bound to the mother country the more they contribute to the strength of the Empire. England must follow the example of ancient Rome, and give to all her Colonies and foreign possessions the right of citizenship and the name of British subjects, and of being considered integral parts of the British Empire. It is due to her greatness and to the maintenance of her position amongst the foremost nations of the world. If she is content to limit her dominions to the British Islands, and desires to cast off her Colonies and to leave them to work out their own destinies, she must withdraw from the first rank and give place to the United States, Russia, France, and Germany, and see herself, at no long distance of time, reduced to a level with her own Colonies in Canada and Australia. But we cannot believe that this is the view taken by British statesmen, Liberal or Conservative, of the question, or which would be sanctioned by the British Parliament. With regard to the question of "Colonial Defence," as put by Captain Colomb, to consist in the command of the Channel, and keeping open five main lines of communication with the Colonies, it seems to us, though we speak with diffidence, being quite aware of how little importance attaches to the opinion of a West Indian newspaper, that so long as England holds her position of maritime supremacy she has nothing to fear for the maintenance of her

lines of communication across the seas. The most difficult to hold of the lines Captain Colomb considers to be that to India by the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, the canal not being in the possession of England. The passage might be barred, but the other line would remain open round the Cape; and India has a base of its own, with a numerous and well-disciplined army, of which a considerable portion is European. India is quite able to hold her own against any foreign attack; she has nothing to fear whilst she remains firm in her allegiance to the sovereignty of England. With regard to the Australian Colonies and Southern Africa, they are strong by natural position and their remoteness, and every day their strength is growing, and with it their capability of self-defence. Coming to the Western Continent, what has Canada to fear, except from an invasion by the United States, a bordering country, whose inhabitants speak the same language, enjoy the same free government, belong to the same race, and are equally interested with themselves to live at peace, to carry on trade and agriculture, and to develop the resources of the immense territories covered by forest and prairie within the limits of each, reaching to the Pacific Ocean? As for the West Indies, they must go with the maritime supremacy; while it remains in the hands of England, no foreign power would venture to disturb them, or think it worth their while to fit out an expedition for their conquest. During the revolutionary wars, England took easy possession of the French and Dutch Colonies, and restored them on the conclusion of peace, seeing no advantage to be got by their retention. The British West Indies form a long line of small islands from Demerara to the Bahamas, about 2,000 miles long, with no base and no centre, and incapable of defence. If England was to throw them up as not worth the expense of retaining the connection, we believe, with Captain Colomb, they would be taken over by the Government at Washington, which has for a long time been desirous of obtaining a naval port in the Windward and Leeward Islands. But we see no reason for anticipating such a calamity, which, for the reasons we have stated above, would be equally felt, and lamented as a cruel sacrifice, by both parties.

"THE WEST INDIAN,"

April 10, 1874.

THE future relations of England and her Colonies have a bearing on the question of Colonial Defence of more practical importance than any other consideration. They will be found to afford grounds for more satisfaction and encouragement than is derived from the history of the past. England has thriven by her Colonies, and may reasonably expect to continue to thrive by them in a greater degree in proportion to the development of their resources. Her Colonies are at all times, in peace or war, her best allies. It was India and the Colonies that supported England through the war with Napoleon, when almost all the ports in Europe were closed against her. Since then the Colonial Empire has extended its boundaries and acquired an importance much beyond what it possessed at the beginning of the century. What new markets are opened in the East, in Australia, in South Africa, in the West Indies, and in British North America, for the commerce of England, and a constant stream of the productions of every climate and quarter of the globe, poured into her lap to enrich her! The Colonies of England are so many centres of English ideas and influence in every part of the world. The more they grow in numbers and in wealth, the greater the strength of the nation, and the stronger the bonds which attach them to the mother country. It is through the Colonies that the English nation spreads itself over new countries in the East and West, and finds a boundless field for its energies. England is reproduced in New Zealand, in Australia, in South Africa, and on the shores of the Pacific in British Columbia. All these centres of British enterprise and industry have been opened up in the reign of Queen Victoria. How wonderful is their growth and flourishing condition at the present moment! What is there to check it? Unchecked, and going on at the same rate of progress during the next ten years, to what a height must it rise! The progress of the United States of America is unprecedented; but it may be doubted if it is greater than that of the British Empire in Australia and Canada; and more doubtful if it will exceed them in the next decade. Putting the United States aside (and what are they but an English Colony?) there is no other nation that can compete with the British in the increase of its population and the development of its resources. And what we would observe is, that this growth is chiefly through the Colonies of the Empire. The Colonies, then, are the roots that supply the

sap and renew the branches of the tree. Surely they deserve all the care and protection that they require to keep them as the outgrowth of the Empire.

This brings us to the consideration of what is wanted for the defence of the Colonies. England has never failed hitherto in alacrity in the defence of her Colonies, however remote or insignificant. What is it we learn by telegraph to-day? That the Queen and the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince Arthur, were present a day or two ago at a review of the troops, on their return from Cape Coast, under Sir G. Wolseley. What were they sent out there to do? To fight the Ashantee king, and to protect the British settlements on the Coast, and the neighbouring tribes from being plundered and carried into slavery. These settlements are kept up more to prevent the carrying on of the slave trade, than for any commercial advantages derived from them; but England will not abandon them when threatened by a formidable enemy, whom they are unable to contend with. Is it to be supposed that she will adopt a less generous policy in defence of Colonies which have much stronger claims upon her, speaking the same tongue, in the enjoyment of the same free institutions with her native-born subjects, and contributing to her wealth and greatness?

We cannot think so. England will not abandon her Colonies, because they are necessary for her wealth and greatness. But it is said she may be compelled to do so, as Rome was. It is not necessary for us to show what a difference there is between the growth of the Colonies of England and of the Roman Empire, the one acquired by force of arms and despotic rule, the other by commerce and the arts of peace. If England has not been wanting in the defence of her Colonies, when they needed it most, in their infancy, and when they were of less value than they are now that they have attained larger dimensions and greater strength, it would be unreasonable to suppose she would act differently towards them under stronger inducements to maintain the connection. There is one thing above all necessary for Colonial defence. It is, as we have said before, the maritime supremacy. Without this, as Captain Colomb points out, the lines of communication between England and the Colonies might be closed. Is there any reason for apprehension on this score, in the condition of the navy of England, as compared with the navies of other countries? We leave this for others to discuss better acquainted with the facts of the case than we are. For the present, and for the next ten years at least, we think it will be admitted, there is little ground for

expecting any material change in the relative strength of the chief maritime powers, or that any one of them will become superior to England, and be in a position to elbow her out of the possession of the Channel. Under these circumstances, what is wanted to provide for the security of the Colonies? What has India to fear? What have the Australian Colonies and South Africa to fear from a foreign attack? We leave these questions for others to answer. We confine our observations to the West Indies, for the reason we have given before, because we are more concerned with them. The West Indies are important in connection with the lines of communication with the South African and Australian Colonies, and with the trade between North and South America, and from the South Atlantic. On this account their defence must always be an object to England. The West Indies, unlike the larger Colonies, must always remain dependencies upon the power that holds the maritime supremacy. With the exception of Guiana they have no room for expansion; though in most of them, Barbados and Jamaica excepted, there is a want of population, and in all considerable improvements, material as well as social and political, might be introduced. It has been suggested that coaling stations should be provided in Jamaica and in one of the Windward and Leeward Islands for the supply of H.M. ships, and be protected by fort or batteries from being destroyed by an unexpected attack of an enemy's cruisers. This could be done at no great expense, and so easily and quickly that it might be left to be done when there was reasonable ground for apprehension of a war between Great Britain and some other maritime power in a position to send cruisers to the West Indies. The future of the West Indies offers no such great expectations as are formed in the larger Colonies; but the prospect is full of encouragement. With a view to the consolidation of the scattered islands, the Imperial Government proposes to confederate them in groups, and to introduce greater uniformity in their tariffs and administrative departments. The introduction of the telegraph wires, railways, new lines of transatlantic steamers, and central factories, cannot fail to produce the same beneficial results in the West Indies as elsewhere; and with these the education of all classes of the inhabitants is better provided for than heretofore. It cannot be denied that the condition of the labouring class has been improved of late, and the results of the great Act of Emancipation are beginning to be realised in the formation of an intelligent and industrious population, and the softening down of jealousies arising from distinctions of colour and race. Time is wanted for the working out of these influences,

which, if not counteracted, will at the end of the next ten years contribute materially to strengthen the ties that bind the Colonies to the mother country, and to the consolidation of the interests of the Colonies themselves.

It is well for us there is the prospect of the continuance of peaceful and friendly relations between Great Britain and the other nations of the world for a series of years, during which the Colonies will have time to grow to maturity and to strengthen themselves by drawing closer the bonds of union. The West Indies form an important link in the chain of communication between those situated on the shores of the North and South Atlantic, and even between the Australian Colonies and England, the chief trade being carried on round the Capes. It is in the common interest of all that this link of the chain should not be allowed to drop out or to be broken, for the question of Colonial defence must be regarded as a whole, and not in parts; not in respect of any particular Colony, or of the defence of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the command of the Channel only, but of all the Colonies, which are integral parts of the Empire, and keeping open the communications between them across the seas. Towards this union and consolidation of interests nothing avails more than the sense of the mutual advantages derived from the alliance by all the parties to it. What these are may be seen in one—in India, where the British name is a tower of strength, a talisman against internal dissension and jealousies, as well as against foreign aggression. The flag of England guarantees the safety of all those who cross the seas, while it secures peace and good government everywhere. The Colonies enjoy the benefits of the equal laws and free institutions of the mother country. Each has its own local administration, making its own laws, and raising and appropriating its own revenues, without derogation from the dignity and prerogatives of the British Crown. So long as the sense of these mutual advantages prevails in the Colonies, that loyal attachment which they have always shown towards the mother country, and none more so than the West Indies, will continue to exist, and continue to be the strongest assurance of their trust in England,—the ground on which they look for her protection in the hour of danger.

"PUBLIC OPINION,"

MALTA, *Wednesday, April* 1, 1874.

THE subject to which Captain J. C. R. Colomb, of the Royal Marine Artillery, has for some time past been endeavouring to call the attention of the Imperial Parliament and of the Colonial Legislatures, is well deserving the study of all those who have at heart the interests of the great Empire which Captain Colomb wishes to have so defended, as to be able to resist any combination that may be formed with the view of dismembering it. The naval and military policy recommended in the lecture before us is most comprehensive and, as far as it goes, complete; and it would be well if this most important subject were seriously attended to by the statesmen who have been called upon to uphold the greatness and the integrity of the Empire.

Whilst attaching the greatest importance to the measures recently taken for placing England in a position to resist any invader, Captain Colomb says: "The defence of the United Kingdom against invasion is an object of primary importance; but to suppose that this is the one thing needful in this matter of national defence is a grievous error. We are bound to look to the general welfare of the Empire. The sources of our greatness are the possession of India and our commercial prosperity. Our commercial prosperity is in direct proportion to the freedom with which we can carry on trade with our Colonies and other countries. Commerce is, in fact, the link that binds together the several interests of the scattered territories comprising the Empire. . . . Bearing this in mind, let us suppose that the view which limits natural defence to the protection of Great Britain and Ireland against invasion be practically adopted, and that the whole resources of the country have been wholly and exclusively directed to rendering the soil of the British Isles secure, and that this object has been fully attained, what would our position be in time of aggressive war on the part of one or more great Powers? Does it not stand to reason that, as the object of all aggressive war is either to acquire territory or to weaken if not to destroy the power of the nation against which war is made, the easier and the safest mode is adopted to carry out these objects? Under the circumstances we have supposed, therefore, an enemy would naturally confine his efforts to destroying our commerce and our power in India, leaving the British Isles to watch his proceedings with impotent dismay. . . .

"If the heart and citadel of the Empire is alone protected, will it 'surprise us to hear' that when the Empire is attacked, our enemy prefers cutting our unprotected communications and appropriating our undefended Colonies and possessions to a direct assault upon a 'small island bristling with bayonets'?"

Now, as Captain Colomb very justly observes, the security of that Island is no guarantee for the safety of twentynine-thirtieths of British territory, or for the protection of the lives and properties of four-fifths of Her Majesty's subjects; and, as Sir C. Pasley wrote in 1808, the strength of an empire composed of several islands or possessions, divided from each other by the sea, will be further modified by the geographical position of its respective parts: the strength of an empire of any kind, whether insular or continental, will be greater or less, with equal resources, in proportion to the facility with which its several parts can afford each other mutual assistance when attacked, and to the difficulty which an enemy may find in supplying and supporting his invading force. From this able exposition of a great military truth two great principles are established:—

1. That it is of vital importance that the safety of the Imperial communications be secured.

2. That it is essential to the military strength of the Empire that forces created or existing for the defence of one portion be not so constituted as to preclude the possibility of using them in the defence of another.

Applying these two fundamental principles, Captain Colomb lays down with great ability a scheme of Colonial Defence, combining the naval and military resources of the Empire for the protection of the whole; and whilst regretting our inability to find room for the lucid exposition of the chief lines of communication and the commanding points in each, we shall make no apology for reproducing the gallant officer's concluding remarks, which, it is to be hoped, will not fail to be maturely considered by the Imperial authorities:—

"The communications of the Empire being the common property of all its component parts, each portion, according to the use it makes of them, has a direct interest in their defence, and should contribute to that object.

"The forces intended for the defence of the communications must be Imperial and not Colonial. They must be prepared to act at any point on the Imperial lines where they may happen to be required. Naval Colonial forces created under the Naval Defence Act of 1865 are only of value, and that to a very limited extent, to

meet the necessities of the second or interior line of Colonial Defence. The forces necessary for the defence of the Imperial communications should be under the control of one directing head. As military force is necessary to the support of naval power, and as in our case military force is in its turn dependent upon naval power, the distribution of the one must have reference to that of the other. If, therefore, the military force is under the control of one department, and the naval force under that of another, the defence of our communications is, to use a homely phrase, 'between two stools.' In vain might our 'Admiralty' despatch fleets to distant seas, if the bases of their operation are not secured by the 'War Office;' equally valueless would be the distribution of military force for the protection of those places by the War Office, if the Admiralty do not keep the communications between them open. Unless there be a war minister responsible for and controlling the general principles which should govern the action of each department, nothing but confusion can result when the Imperial communications are in danger. If the Colonies are really in earnest in matters relating to their defence, it is time they should combine to force on the attention of the Imperial Parliament the neglected state of the Imperial roads, and the necessity for devising adequate means for their security. They must, however, be prepared to bear their fair share of the burden.

"If the mind of the mother country is morbid, and, from dwelling continually on the terrors of invasion, has lost the power of comprehending the consequences of investment, it is time her young and vigorous offspring should awaken her to a true sense of her position.

"A Royal Commission to inquire into the defence of the Imperial communications, if properly constituted on an Imperial basis, would lead to most important results. It may be taken as a certainty that such a commission would recommend the permanent strengthening of the great strategic points, which it would be in a position accurately to define. It might possibly determine the just limits of Imperial and Colonial responsibilities in the question of defence.

"With the creation of Imperial fortresses commanding the Imperial roads, would grow up a feeling of common security. They would be links in the chain which binds together the military forces of our Empire—stepping-stones by which those forces can cross to afford mutual assistance and support.

"Such a commission and such measures might prepare the way for a federation of the war forces of the Empire, which is essen-

tial to its safety. It would be easier in a given time to collect forces from all parts of the Empire at a given point now, than it was to concentrate the military forces in the United Kingdom on any particular place on the coast line sixty years ago. It is singular that when science has done and is doing so much to increase our power of concentration, Imperial policy should be undoing her work by persisting in the creation of local forces which it is impossible to move, and all this at a time when concentration is the great principle of attack, and the power of concentration is the great principle of defence. Though by nature and by science we possess all the physical means necessary for the concentration of military forces, we have neglected to turn them to account, and further, by limiting the action of military forces to the particular portions of the Empire where they are raised, we wilfully destroy the necessary power of resisting concentrated attack by a combination of Imperial resources, which is in these days the true source of strength.

"It is only in maintaining the second line of Colonial defences that local forces are of real value, but it is the duty of the Empire to see that they are provided with the means and weapons to enable them to act. For the first and third lines, they are of no avail, so long as the necessary power of concentration at the weakest point is absent. It is military necessity, and not constitutional law, which determines where the greatest power of resistance is to be applied.

"While we acknowledge and applaud the principle, that it is every man's duty to defend his home, it is to be regretted that our ideas of its practical application are lamentably indistinct. The mother country has put her own construction on the word 'home' in applying the principle of calling into existence military forces which can only be used to put up her shop shutters and to bar her doors. She calls on her children to adopt her definition of its meaning and to follow her example, and some have done so. But who among the armies thus organised, for what she is pleased to call 'home defence,' can determine the exact distance from a man's home at which the obligation ends? Who can draw the magic circle which is to include the territorial area of his duty to die for his country? Home is something more than an abstract idea having reference only to locality—its foundations are laid in common interests, sympathy, and affections. 'A silver streak of sea' cannot divide these interests, nor can miles of ocean sever the strong ties of affection and of sympathy. Hence it is that, from whatever quarter of the Empire a cry for help comes—wherever the British

flag waves over Englishmen struggling on their own ground for all they hold dear—it is there our home is in danger, there is the rallying point of forces created for its defence.

"While we boast of armed hosts here and in the Colonies, whose proud motto is 'home defence,' they must 'survey the Empire' to 'behold our home.'"

Without entering into the Imperial questions of the highest importance raised by Captain Colomb in his able and patriotic paper, we shall confine our attention to the measures that ought to be taken with the view of defending this commanding point in the main line of communication with India, China, and Australasia by the Mediterranean. There can be no doubt that the Imperial Government is fully alive to the great importance of Malta as a naval and military station: the improvements recently carried out in its armament and the additional works of defence which are even now being constructed, appear to have rendered the island absolutely impregnable. On the other hand, are the warlike stores and the war material on the spot, sufficient to meet the emergencies contemplated by Captain Colomb, and which alone can justify the annual expenditure of so much treasure? And what is of still greater importance, is the number of men permanently stationed here sufficient to man even the most important works of defence? Where could be found a safer or better defended depôt for both men and war material to be used, not only in defending the Island, but also to be despatched, at the shortest notice, to India and the other distant dependencies of the Crown? Is the dock accommodation sufficient to repair and refit such ships as may be disabled in an engagement at so great a distance from England? And what about the coal depôts? These are all considerations which have no doubt occurred to the able naval and military commanders on the station; though they may have remained unheeded by the central government, especially under the rigid economy preached by the late Administration. Indeed, if we are to judge from the reduction lately effected in the R. M. F. Artillery against the deliberate opinion of H. E. the Lieutenant-General Commanding, we cannot form a very high opinion of the wisdom or the statesmanship by which such measures are suggested and carried out. At a time when artillery is acquiring so much importance in the composition of all armies,—at a time when owing to the additional works that are being constructed, a greater number of artillerymen would be required,—the War Department effected a reduction of nearly 300 men, that cost much less than the Royal Artillerymen, each of whom had to be conveyed from the United Kingdom and re-

conveyed thither after his time of service had expired, at no inconsiderable expense. But as if to show that not economy, but only a whim was the motive by which the Secretary of State was actuated, whilst the men were struck off the strength of the R. M. F. A., the officers have all been retained. It is to be hoped that this was done with the intention of soon restoring this useful corps to its original strength; and the sooner this intention is carried out, the better will it be for all parties concerned. Not only has a deal of suffering been entailed on the poor men discharged and their families, but the people at large could not but feel offended at the reduction of the only native corps which has been left in the service of Her Majesty. It is, we believe, the opinion of high military authorities that the garrison of Malta should be increased rather than reduced; and considering the peculiar circumstances of the Island, we think it would be wise to raise another corps of native artillery, that would be comparatively of very little cost and would prove most useful, not only in case of an attack, but also in time of peace. Besides an increase both in the British and native forces of which the permanent garrison should be composed, we think corps of volunteers should be organised, and instructed principally in the handling of artillery, for service in case of an attack. We have on former occasions proposed the formation of such corps, but hitherto without any effect. Nor should the British Government lose sight of the fact that the goodwill and affection of the people is a most important element in the defence of a country situated like Malta; and it would not be difficult, if the Imperial authorities were to examine with their own eyes, to effect such reforms in the government as would satisfy the Maltese, and show them that besides the security of the fortress of Malta, the British Government are not unmindful of the existence of the civil population, whose happiness and prosperity they are anxious to promote. The fleet might also be more largely recruited from among the seafaring population, whose steadiness and sobriety the naval authorities have had ample opportunities of testing.

But we have already said more than we originally intended, and we must conclude. Captain Colomb's paper appears to us to contain suggestions of the highest importance; and a royal commission as proposed by him would tend to enlighten both the Government and the public concerning the defence of the Imperial communications to be established on an Imperial basis. Inquiries of such magnitude and importance can only be made in times of profound peace like the present, which are also most suitable for

the taking of such defensive measures as shall efficiently protect from a combined attack all the parts of the Empire to which England owes so large a share of her wealth and commercial prosperity. And if England is to maintain that position among the European nations which she has so deservedly earned, she must be prepared to assert that position much sooner, perhaps, than may be generally expected. That, when the hour of trial and of danger arrives, she may be found strong and invulnerable in all points, is a consummation which all her sons cannot but be most anxious to promote.

"THE ST. HELENA GUARDIAN,"

May 7, 1874.

We have received, and have been requested to give public expression to our opinion upon, a remarkable pamphlet upon "Colonial Defence," read before the Royal Colonial Institute a few months ago by Captain Colomb, late of the R.M. Artillery. In the accompanying letter, dated 1st March, Captain Colomb justly describes his subject as one which of late years has been treated either with apathy or neglect by the Imperial Parliament, but yet one of vast importance both to the mother country and to every portion of the Empire, no matter how fragmentary. It may be thought that this is especially a professional question, and that the request for further facts and opinions might have been more properly addressed to naval and military authorities than to newspaper editors. Yet nowadays even newspaper writing has its value if only the condition can be impressed on readers that facts are honestly given and opinions carefully formed. The pamphlet we allude to is placed for perusal in the public library. In it the main scope of the writer's argument is to show that while formerly Great Britain, having immense foreign possessions but a comparatively small army, committed the grave error of scattering that small force in detachments over the whole world, and locked up a great part of it in positions that could never be of any military importance, in later times the very opposite error has taken place. The whole available military force has been concentrated at home, leaving the most important positions abroad, except India, quite defenceless. Captain Colomb lays it down as an axiom that communications whether by sea or land, whether long or short, can only be secured by a firm grasp of the points which command them. He divides the great routes of the world into five lines of communication :—

1st, to Canada; 2nd, to the West Indies; 3rd, to India by the Mediterranean; 4th, to and from the East Indies, round the Cape, and 5th, the route round Cape Horn.

We at St. Helena are chiefly concerned with the fourth route, or great ocean highway from the East, and we find that Captain Colomb indicates as strategic points on this line—Sierra Leone, Ascension, St. Helena, Simon's Bay, Mauritius, and King George's Sound. As regards Sierra Leone, St. Helena, and Ascension, he assigns prominent importance to them from the circumstance that the Imperial roads round the Cape and round Cape Horn cross each other at a point on the equator about 23° west longitude, and that if a moderate circle be described on the chart from this point it will include the three stations named. Now we are inclined to believe that he has placed the point of meeting of the routes a little too far west, and that in the event of war, which is the very contingency under discussion, the Falkland Islands would be the point of call of all homeward ships round the Horn, and then their point of meeting the homeward route round the Cape of Good Hope would be so near to St. Helena, that practically, in event of an existing European war in which our country were concerned, St. Helena would be the point of meeting of these two routes and a very important point of defence, and that neither Sierra Leone nor Ascension are points of any real importance;—the first from being out of the merchant track either outward or homeward, and the latter from the few facilities offered by nature—the absence of safe anchorage, convenient landing, fresh water, or other refreshments. Everything there depends upon a lavish Government expenditure, to which if there should be any interruption, the Island remains a mere barren rock. At St. Helena we have had some lessons which, if Captain Colomb's views gain acceptance, may be of value. In the Russian War of 1854-5, and in the American Civil War of 1862-4, we had here at St. Helena illustrations of the value of the Island as a point of protection to our trade. Had the Russian frigates in 1854 made a dash at this Island and carried it, they could without doubt have held the place for six months at least, and what interruption and damage to our shipping would have ensued may be imagined. The famous cruise of the *Alabama* in the American War will show what might be done by one single cruiser between the Cape and St. Helena if there were no force at hand to protect our commerce.

Many officers of the navy and army of considerable experience, and whose opinions should carry weight, have concurred in the belief that St. Helena is a point of great importance; that its

remarkably pure and healthy climate, abundance of fresh water, and capability of producing supplies of fresh provisions, as well as its excellent anchorage and freedom from the rolling surfs of Ascension and the coast of Africa, all offer advantages possessed neither by Ascension, Sierra Leone, nor the Cape de Verd Islands; that it is naturally fitted to be the head-quarters of the African squadron, and that the commanding officer of that squadron should be its governor, with a garrison of marines. Suppose for a moment that this idea had been carried out, and that last year the Governor of St. Helena had been free to sail to the Gold Coast on the first breaking out of hostilities, accompanied with a battalion of European troops accustomed to a healthy yet tropical climate, and within five days' steam of the scene of operations,—the result could not have been more successful, but the bill of expenses might have been considerably diminished and the hospital casualties perhaps lessened. In the course of these last operations on the coast it was represented to the authorities that St. Helena was the finest tropical climate in the world, empty barracks in perfect order for 500 men, a little model military hospital side by side with a civil hospital, both furnished with appliances more than needed for their ordinary occupants; also a Government House unused, containing thirty-eight furnished rooms with beautiful grounds and every other appurtenance for comfort, offered as a hospital and sanatarium for officers, and all within five days' steam of the Gold Coast. But this came to nothing, and hundreds of sick were sent to St. Vincent, Madeira, Gibraltar, and many other out of the way places, and not one to St. Helena. Two small Islands in the South Atlantic Ocean are both possibly of importance in some contingency—St. Helena and Ascension. In the ordinary course of things it would be imagined these two little Islands should be united under one Government. But no, that is not at all the case. Ascension belongs to the Admiralty. It is not a Colony, but a ship; while St. Helena is admitted to the full honours of a British Colony and is governed by the Secretary of State. The consequences may not be apparent to the uninitiated, but they are important. At Ascension, whatever money is wanted to be spent is procured by the commanding naval officer asking the Admiral to sanction it in the name of the guardship stationed there—say the old *Flora;* and whether the sum be twenty pounds or twenty thousand pounds, is practically the same; the expenses of Ascension are never brought before Parliament, and the only thing a curious inquirer can find out is that a guardship at Ascension is always the most expensive vessel in the Navy. Now St. Helena, being placed

under the Colonial Office, has to provide for its local expenditure by local taxation, and should anything beyond this be required it must be introduced into some parliamentary vote and be subject to parliamentary questioning. Yet there is as good reason for the one Island being supported by Imperial funds as the other, and many distinguished officers, both naval and military, have advocated this view. In his latest Governor's report, Vice-Admiral Patey, who, however unpopular here, is a good authority on professional subjects, says that "the situation of St. Helena in mid-ocean renders it a most important position for Imperial purposes as a coaling station and depôt for vessels of war." Moreover if we were engaged in hostilities the sinking of a ship in the Suez Canal might close that passage, and then St Helena would be hardly less valuable than Malta or Gibraltar. "Two or three steamers stationed here," says Admiral Patey, "would intercept the whole returning trade from the East."

A former Governor—Sir Thomas Gore Browne—held the same opinions, and being here at the outbreak of the Russian war of twenty years ago, adopted the most energetic measures of precaution lest the Island might be surprised and captured by Russian frigates, of which more than one were supposed to be cruising in these seas. Admiral Hornby, when commanding the African Squadron, was of the same opinion as to the importance of St. Helena in the possible event of war, and we have some reason to believe, although we write without authority, that Commodore Hewett, now in command of the station, takes a similar view of the value of this Island. Much more could be said on this subject, but our space is limited and our article already very long.

"THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD,"

June 8, 1874.

Ostentatious assurances of peace have been too often the harbingers of war. Lulled into false security by the interchange of peaceful compliments, nations have suddenly found themselves unprepared to meet aggression and repel invasion. The Machiavellian policy has been daringly pursued of late in European politics, and even now the words of amity and concord are possibly used to conceal thoughts, after the fashion of Talleyrand. Anyhow, we lay but feeble stress on speeches which are really guarded though seemingly candid, and on the press opinions of countries whose aims, hopes, and resolves point in an opposite direction. All is halcyon-

like at present; but the cyclone is as unexpected as terrible when it comes. There is nothing, in fact, to satisfy us that there is settled tranquillity, or that men may follow their every-day avocations without a thought for the morrow. The views of the situation are delusive—the descriptions are forced and unreal. "The voice is Jacob's voice; but the hands are the hands of Esau."

We are no alarmists, but neither are we over-credulous. The signs of the times betoken a change in the political weather, and even the far-seeing public men have not failed to tell us so. Before Mr. Disraeli succeeded to power he drew a gloomy forecast of the future, and hinted that our foreign affairs should be entrusted to a clear head and a strong hand. Whatever Mr. Disraeli's opinion in general may be worth matters little here, but great coming events have often cast their shadows before in his speeches. The questions asked in the English Parliament regarding the prospects of peace also indicate the existence of many misgivings and fears among those usually best informed. The advancing preparations in Russia and the open counsel of Von Moltke also favour the conclusion that, though no panic need be provoked, no quiescent self-satisfaction need be encouraged. England has no immediate dread of the war troubles that periodically affect nations, yet she may well prepare for the stormy day. Let us fervently hope that that day may be long averted.

But in times of peace, far removed from the din of battle and the tumult of opinion, it is well to consider dispassionately the position we occupy, and how we would be situated in the event of war. Besides, it is only in such times that we can fully realise the best and the worst of existing policies and systems, and alter or amend them in accordance with the dictates of prudence and the fullest experience. The greatest battles of late years were battles fought on clearly-defined principles and the amplest information. It is well known that the Germans, in anticipation of the bitter revival of the Rhine question, made France a special study, and found good means to draw from her in peaceful years the secret of her overthrow. Nowadays, as ever, to be warned is to be forearmed; and further, to test and reflect on the policy we espouse is to make us more fit to grapple with any difficulty that may arise. European complications may ere long attract our notice, without touching us home in the smallest degree; but, meantime, it is as well to look in the face aught that might endanger us then.

The question of Colonial Defences is, of course, paramount with us. We are thankfully confident that the soil of Britain is likely to remain as sacred and free as ever from the foot of the invader,

and we experience no trepidation on that score. The well-drilled Voluntary force, auxiliary to a properly-recruited and powerful regular Army, encircled, too, by the finest and strongest Navy in the world, may dispel any fears we might foolishly entertain regarding the safety of our island home. But it is not so with the rest of the Empire. The centre, the citadel, is secure, but the outposts are not invulnerable. The scattered immensity of our Empire leaves it peculiarly open and liable to attack, unless measures are concerted and carried out for its due and full protection. The altered policy of the Imperial Government renders this fact doubly significant and urgent. When the violation of solemn treaties, which were bonds written in blood, is permitted or connived at, and our "moral" influence is the only supreme influence we can boast, if indeed it is worth bragging about, it is high time to scan the political horizon and watch for the black clouds that may loom even over the Euxine. At a time, too, when a faithful ally and the control of a highway to some of our richest lands are surrendered voluntarily, we may be chary of trusting hasty politicians or incautious and over-sympathetic statesmen. It is blazoned on our patriotic shield that the sun never sets on our Empire, and that very truth it is which proclaims to us the dangers our vast possessions, wealth, and commerce entail on us. Everywhere our flag flies the honour of England is at stake, and a shock or injury to any member of the Empire is felt at the remotest extremity. No wonder, then, that the subject of Imperial defence is engaging the anxious attention of many of our foremost writers, and that addresses delivered on the subject, in London, should reach us here. An able address on "Colonial Defences," by Captain J. C. R. Colomb, R.M.A., has been forwarded to us, and we gladly proceed to consider it. It has been already stamped with the approval of the Royal Colonial Institute, as it well deserved to be in virtue of the position and ability of the author. If we do not altogether agree with Captain Colomb, we thank him none the less for the excellent persistency and intelligent advocacy he has displayed in urging this question on Parliament.

A clear view is here presented to us of the change which has come over the spirit of the Imperial dream. The existence of an indifferent party is alluded to, or rather, we are reminded that certain authorities in England evince little concern for either the present or the future of the Colonies. We are well acquainted with their language and tactics, and can afford to treat them with reciprocal indifference. Fortunately the ligature which connects the mother country and the Colonies is vitally close, and cannot be severed

without danger to both. In race, language, and interests they are one; and any statesman who talks superciliously or acts callously towards the Colonies, requires no reproachful word from us, for his conduct is speedily and indignantly arraigned at home. It may be assumed, then, that in any project for the defence of the Empire, the thoughts and feelings of our insular countrymen are fondly directed across the sea, as well as to the immediate safety of their homes and hearths. Moreover, it may well be said that "England with her Colonies is still a giant amongst nations, and that without them she would be a dwarf." It is easy enough to defend a dwarf, but then he is only a dwarf. When the English horn of plenty overflows with the rich produce of her far-off climes, and peace has rest for the sole of her foot, then the magnitude and value of her possessions is eloquently acknowledged. Shall it, then, be a reproach to her that in the hour of her adversity she forgot all this, and selfishly looked merely to the protection of her own chalk cliffs and hedgerows? We opine not. We have no reason to believe or even to surmise this. What individual politicians may urge matters little when the will of the people is so easily asserted. The giant will remain a giant in war as in peace; and how this is to be done may be seen.

That there has been a change of policy in respect to the disposition of the British forces everybody knows, and few regret. The scattered armies were of small account after all. Any little hubbub over the determination to concentrate rather than distribute the Imperial forces has disappeared, and many wonder why so much fuss was made about so little. A "pressing necessity" did exist for defending "the Imperial base of operations" by withdrawing the insufficient garrisons formerly maintained on the Colonial outposts; for, with slight exception, they were needless, expensive, and happily got rid of. To the exception we shall recur. Meantime it may be observed that the Colonies are quite satisfied with their own little armies. They will be able to do all the work that is required of them. The New South Wales soldiers are men who literally have an interest in defending their homes, for the guerdon of their service and efficiency is a portion of the land they occupy. This material stimulus to patriotism is, however, unnecessary, for in a time of imminent peril our citizen army would bravely take the field. We want—we require no standing army here. If England does her duty this Colony at least will do hers. Increased and stronger harbour and coast defences, and a gradual filling up of the ranks, will go far to protect all that we hold dear. Besides, in these days of rapid communication, addi-

tional troops can be landed on any shore. There is always sufficient warning of impending danger to enable the Imperial Government to send assistance to the places most likely to need it. Difficulties that seemed insurmountable have been in two recent instances expeditiously and triumphantly overcome. The story of Hannibal almost pales before our campaign in Abyssinia; and the Ashantee war is a glorious proof of England's rapid power of enforcing her authority and displaying her ability to transport troops to far-off countries. But the dangers that would menace us could only arise from wars of a different kind; yet even then, we repeat, England could readily stretch out her arm to aid her Colonial armies. For the reasons stated we do not agree with Captain Colomb, when he ventures to speak lightly of "the general rule of self-reliance." Why, that is the inspiring rule of our Colonies, the very genius of a self-made people. And if the general rule of self-reliance "fails to solve the problem of Imperial defence" it nevertheless goes far towards its solution.

But the question bears an altered complexion when we come to look at the vulnerability of the Empire along the lines of communication. It is essential to our commercial prosperity that our ships should sail the ocean unmolested, and that our great southern and eastern marts and cities should be secured from attack. "Commerce is, in fact, the link that binds together the several interests of the scattered territories comprising the Empire." The destruction of her commerce would be the ruin of Britain. She must still rule the wave, and inspire confidence in those who trust their argosies to her powerful care. And no fear of attack or investment will ever make us quake so long as we know that England can protect her ships, for she can then intercept an enemy's fleet.

The geographical position, conditions, and resources of Canada and other Colonies referred to by Captain Colomb are so dissimilar to those of Australasia that we need not descant on them here. Neither do we think it necessary to follow him in his surmises and prognostics regarding the possible victory of the Americans in the West Indies, and how far such a conquest would affect the safety of our North American dominions. These problematical difficulties but retard the proper study and drift of the question. They lend no weight to the argument they are made to sustain, and the argument itself is a weak one. It is argued that fragmentary self-reliant forces are of no use, for to be of any value they must be fitted to move from one attacked point to another. Now this strikes at the root of what may be called our system of domestic defence. New South Wales, for instance, should not, cannot indeed, be asked to pour her defenders into Ceylon or the West Indies, nor would she

expect to be similarly assisted. The only movable troops available are those of the Imperial army. They ought to be shifted from one threatened or assailed place to another, as the occasion demands. The self-reliant, isolated armies of the "fragments" of the Empire will do yeoman service on their own ground, and that is all that may be expected of them. That is the reason of their being, and that is the object of the movement which has met with such laudable success.

The two great principles laid down by Captain Colomb, and which are deduced from the able exposition of Sir Charles Pasley, published sixty-five years ago, are—

"1. That it is of vital importance that the safety of the Imperial communications be secure.

"2. That it is essential to the military strength of the Empire that forces created or existing for the defence of one portion be not so constituted as to preclude the possibility of using them in the defence of another."

We have already alluded to this second principle, and, so far as we are concerned, fail to see its applicability to the circumstances for the reasons assigned above. But the first is the all important principle. "The lines of communication all radiate from the waters surrounding the British islands; the loss, therefore, of our command there cuts every one of the Imperial lines." This is so self-evident as to require no proof. Further: "Of what avail is it if our Colonies, though protected in their own immediate neighbourhood, are "locked out" from the mother country by a force in the Channel against which we are unable to contend? Of what use is it protecting our commerce on distant seas if it is to be destroyed within sight of the shores of England?" None whatever. But then we assume that the first line of communication will not be broken, that English statesmen are sagacious enough to maintain a fleet sufficient for all purposes. Again: "The defence of communications, whether long or short, can only be secured by a firm grasp of the points which command them. The greater the extent of line, the greater is the number of defended points necessary for its safety. In order to cut a line of communication, the first thing to be done is to seize the point which commands it, and in defending a line the point which commands it is the last to surrender. Such points are the minor bases of operation of forces acting in defence of the line. The relative importance of such points to the line and to each other can only be estimated by the circumstances of their geographical position and their distance from the main base from which the line springs."

These are precisely the considerations which affect the outlying portions of the Empire. Secure and unbroken communication with Britain is essential to the safety of the Empire, and the means requisite to ensure this are decidedly within our reach. The first condition is the existence of a strong army for home defence; the second, the existence of a sufficient force in each of the most exposed outposts; the third, the existence of additional forces ready to be moved if required to other distant possessions; and the fourth, the existence of a fleet to protect the Imperial centre, to guard our commerce, and to transport the necessary troops on emergency. England must ever have an army of occupation in India, and garrisons in her foreign dependencies, and "towers along the steep." Her sentry-boxes along the ocean highway must never be vacant, nor her harbours of refuge neglected. But this is quite a different thing from planting a standing army in thoroughly English Colonies. Besides, the troops required to strengthen her valuable posts, and garrison her strategic points, may be spared in time of peace from the regular army, and kept as cheaply on such foreign service.

"It is important to bear in mind that the more war fleets rely on machinery and artificial motive power, the more necessary are fixed bases of operation to their action, and the greater must be the resources of those bases. Hence it is that as the science of naval warfare advances, the necessity for developing these resources at the great strategic points, and for efficiently protecting them, will probably increase." This is indisputably and suggestively true. All along our lines of communication the more assailable positions must be strengthened, and their natural resources developed and protected for England's advantage. The importance of coaling stations, for instance, cannot be overlooked. These are indispensable necessities in these days of steam warfare. England possesses almost a monopoly of this material force, and she can judiciously expend it. Strongly-fortified islands might be made depôts for coal, in case our cruisers' supply became short. Many spots of our Empire might be selected: Fiji has been mentioned as one. The value of these islands has been enhanced by the establishment of the San Francisco mail service, and their suitability as a place of call is now beyond dispute. They form, too, a middle point of defence between Australia and Vancouver's Island, and would be either a great strength or weakness to us in the event of a war, say with America. Let them be made a stronghold as well as a coal depôt.

Captain Colomb further advocates the establishment of a great

naval arsenal in this hemisphere. The suggestion is feasible and practicable, and, next to the strategic stationing of our ships, demands earnest and serious attention. Indeed, the one thing depends on the other. A large, scattered, defensive steam fleet requires repairing, and ammunition as well as coal; and the erection of depôts is not more essential than the construction of an arsenal. The outlay would doubtless be great, but even in times of peace the docks might be profitably used for the Government advantage. Wherever such an arsenal might be situated, whether in Bombay or in Australia, it would, we venture to believe, be a great and invaluable support to our defence.

But we need not follow Captain Colomb farther, unless it be to record another disagreement between us. He believes that any expense incurred in repairing "the state of the Imperial roads" ought to be shared by the Colonies. We think not. We impose no burden on the mother country for the maintenance of our safety ashore, and so long as we are integral portions of the Empire we believe it is her duty to keep the roads in repair. Her honour, wealth, and supremacy are dear to us all, but they concern herself first and principally. Our share of the obligation we willingly do, and to the statesmen of Great Britain we look for the rest.

We may refer by and by to our more immediate local defences.

"THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD,"

June 15, 1874.

In dealing with the larger and Imperial question, we followed Captain Colomb as far as we could, even to differing often with him. But we cannot forget that in putting this question so clearly and forcibly before the world he has challenged criticism, and deserves to have his plans and projects carefully and rationally treated. Fortunately, his scheme is the outcome of great technical and practical knowledge, and can bear the brunt of opinion adverse to his views. Yet there is little, after all, upon which we can differ. His Australian proclivity is marked, and marked with reason. We care nothing about the flippant writers who condescend to portray us after a flying visit, or who, after seeing the "Sow and Pigs," write feebly about defences. Such visitors may sojourn at the "Heads." But when a man of known and recognised experience in military matters, and whose voice had some strength in it when the distribution of the forces was the main

question, tells us a few home truths, we are bound in courtesy, and really in this instance in fairness, to listen to him.

Among other things, Captain Colomb has suggested an arsenal. He is in doubt whether this necessity ought to be Australian or Indian; but, if anything, his inclination leans towards us, and leaning thus, suggests Sydney. Bombay may easily be defended —so far as Bombay requires to be made secure, and as an Indian outport it will ever command serious and anxious attention. But to talk of it as the centre of repairing, fitting-up, and coaling in this hemisphere, to speak of it as the Woolwich-Portsmouth away from England, is rank absurdity. The circumstances and conditions are averse to the position. Bombay is ours through force, and is but a portion of our wealthiest dependency. As we said in a previous article, no works of such vital importance should be constructed save among our own people. Fortify, strengthen Bombay, if they choose; still the British Government know that it is theirs only so long as their prudent strength is asserted. It is far otherwise with Australia. Here is a loyal people, having the welfare and supremacy of the Empire as much at heart as those who see Her Majesty in London, or welcome her victorious troops from the ends of the earth.

An arsenal must be constructed somewhere in these southern seas, for in the days of steam fleets no one can gainsay the need. Ammunition, repairing, coals, are all suggested by this great fact. Now, the question naturally arises, Where is the fittest and most secure place for such an arsenal? We have scanned the map in the Imperial interest, and have come home with the fortified conviction that Sydney must be the place selected for this warlike preparation. There is no harbour that can be so easily made impregnable, and there is no strategic point of greater value. Sydney can readily furnish the proper kind of supplies for a steam fleet. Coal is to be had in abundance. From the south and the west by rail, and from the north by sea, coal can be brought without difficulty and at little cost, and stored up in quantities sufficient to meet any emergency. And as this forms an essential point in the calculation, it is in itself enough to justify the advocacy of Sydney as the fittest situation for the proposed arsenal.

It must not be forgotten, however, that the site of the arsenal is in war time an especial object of attack. To destroy the arsenal, or to capture it for inimical uses, is the grand aim of every maritime power during hostilities. It is therefore obvious that that site must be made so strong as to repel the notion of attacking it. It will require a vast outlay to satisfy all the requirements of the

position, for the defences must be strengthened to an extent commensurate with the Imperial interests at stake. Neither skill, labour, nor money must be spared when a decision has been come to. The honour of England, and the safety of her fleet, are not trifling considerations, and a nation so affluent can well afford the means to pay for increased security; for it cannot be supposed for a moment that any of the expense would fall on the Colony. The work suggested is Imperial, not local. The Colonists cannot be asked to contribute towards the erection or protection of an arsenal which increases their dangers. Rather, they may well think it is the duty of the mother country to take upon herself every burden incident to this standing invitation to attack. Wherever the arsenal may be placed, the same reasons must accompany the consideration of its defence; so it is with no personal feeling that we offer these necessary remarks on the altered position Sydney would occupy when made the great Imperial depôt for coals and ammunition.

The lines of communication being strongly guarded, and the strategic points thereon sharpened against the enemy, the defence of territorial areas would become quite a secondary matter. Nevertheless, every conceivable opening for the enemy's forces must be closed up, and the weak points along the coast strengthened. Wherever the temptation to land exists, the means of repelling invasion must be multiplied. But, after all, the harbour claims pre-eminent and urgent consideration, and how best to fortify and protect it is the main question at present. It is the duty of this Colony to see that nothing is wanting to its support. If no arsenal is built here, that duty will be the more imperative, but if built here, then the Imperial Government may wisely be requested to help in defending it.

Harbour defences have attracted much attention lately in America, and the comparative value of forts and torpedoes have been intelligently tested. As a means of defence against steam vessels, forts are out of date. The attack on Forts Jackson and St. Philip, below New Orleans, during the American war, has been cited in proof of this statement. These forts were in every way equipped and prepared for the fight, and they had the notable advantage of an excellent situation. "To assist the forts were several tow-boats and steamships, which had been partly plated with railroad iron and converted into rams; a number of immense barges had been filled with lightwood and smeared with turpentine, which were fired and sent adrift to impede the progress of the advancing ships. The Confederate navy had also some force present." Yet, despite these precautions and prepared strength of the forts, seventeen out

of twenty steam vessels went by successfully. "The fleet formed in columns of twos, half sweeping past Fort Jackson, close aboard, and the other half steaming by St. Philip, yard-arms hanging over the parapets nearly." These strongholds once passed, the key of the situation was gained, and the consequent resistance proved to be both feeble and unavailing. Now, let us take Port Jackson and view its position in the light of the following observations. Suppose the same fleet to be outside the Heads. "Having a purpose to enter and lay our town under contribution, would we feel comfortable? They would wait for the flood tide at night, and, instead of having a four-knot current to contend against (as in the case of Fort Jackson and St. Philip), they would have it in their favour, and go spinning by at the rate of fifteen miles an hour; and, hugging the high cliffs, they would scarcely be perceptible to the gunners at the fort." True there are, fortunately, many impediments to this easy entrance into Sydney Harbour; but allowing for these does not materially weaken the remaining dangers. These are, indeed, great and numerous enough to awaken concern and to suggest improved and stronger defence.

Our forts, if here and there defective, are as good as anything that could be devised, but here we do not propose to discuss their relative strength, but rather to inquire whether they are the only or the best means of defence we could have. That they are necessary is indisputable, but that they are sufficient we do not believe. Aided by movable iron forts they might constitute as powerful a guard as Sydney required; but something more is wanted to complete the defence, and enable us to banish all fear of investment. Torpedoes have been recently tried, and we all know with what result. The material for their construction is at hand, and neither delay nor serious cost need be incurred in furnishing a supply of these indispensable weapons. Not only must torpedoes be laid down at the more vulnerable points, they must be propelled by vessels; for it has been proved that the torpedo boat "with power and speed is a match for the ironclad." The essential and incalculable importance of relying mainly on such boats would be inevitably felt if we were ever subjected to attack, and had to defend our harbour against a powerful fleet. Nor is the expense of this invincible defender tantamount to its value. "Small but very powerful tugs, driven by twin-screws, carrying a torpedo on a staff-head, is all that is needed." These must be sufficient in number, and ever ready to strike when the enemy assails our forts. They could be built and equipped at the arsenal, in the protection of which they would be largely employed.

But let us return again to Captain Colomb. His scheme has less reference to harbour defences than to the disposition of land forces. We have already expressed our dissent from the proposal to draft troops from one Colony to another, or from one Colony to some remote possession. Self-defence and self-reliance must be the watchwords, and each Colony will do its duty if it provides a force sufficient to protect its own territory. New South Wales has, however, not gone far enough yet in the right direction. Two or three thousand soldiers could do little against any foe that obtained a landing on our shore. The enemy might land on the Hawkesbury, or in Botany Bay, or make a diversion at one place while forcing a footing on the other. Our troops would then be able to show but a feeble resistance, for divided they would form but slight lines of defence. It is, indeed, our bounden duty to set our military house in order. The tocsin of war may any day be sounded, and be heard across the waves. We must not be found insufficiently protected, nor rely on anyone more than on ourselves. Our little army must be increased, and that as early as possible.

We can perceive no objection to the adoption of the simple scheme we here propose. Twenty to thirty thousand troops could easily be raised by a system of gentle compulsion. All Colonists between the ages of seventeen and thirty, and not exempt by doctors' certificates or on professional grounds, should be called up for (say) one month in each year, in addition to occasional attendance at drills after business hours. In this way efficiency would be promoted, and our citizen soldiers formed into something like an army. And with this suggestion we leave the question for the present.

"THE CORNWALL CHRONICLE,"

June 22, 1874.

The mail by the R.M.S.S. *Nubia* brought to hand a letter addressed to us by Captain J. C. R. Colomb, R.M.A., dated "Junior United Service Club, London, 1st March, 1874," and accompanying a paper read by him at the Royal Colonial Institute, the Duke of Manchester, President, in the chair. Amongst numerous English and Colonial members of the Institute present were Sir Francis Smith, Edward Wilson, Esq., and F. S. Dutton, Esq., the latter Agent-General for South Australia. Captain Colomb referred, almost at the outset of his remarks, to the panic which had seized England in 1859, when the population imagined that France

threatened their safety, and even their existence as a nation; and yet the policy of the Gladstone Government was to shut their eyes to the fact of the possibility, not only of the invasion of England, but the possibility of investment—the cutting off the Imperial lines of communication, with attacks upon her vast Colonial Empire, her extended commerce and interests in every quarter of the globe. The effect of that panic was, to cause the recall of England's armies and fleets, scattered indiscriminately over the globe, to protect the heart of the empire—the result, that the late Government was in a position to say that England is now better prepared to resist an attempted invasion than during any past period of her history; but at what a cost? That of leaving her Colonies almost unprotected. Under these circumstances, when an enemy attacks, will he not prefer cutting off Britain's unprotected communications, and appropriating her undefended Colonies, to making a direct assault upon a small island bristling with bayonets? This is the forcible point in Captain Colomb's excellent paper, and it is one which comes home very closely to every Colonist. Great Britain proper comprises only one-thirtieth of British territory and one-fifth of Her Majesty's subjects, the other four-fifths being left, comparatively speaking, unprotected from foreign invasion. These are told to arm themselves, and protect their hearths and homes, to be self-reliant, and do as the mother country does. The Dominion of Canada has succeeded best in this way; other British Colonies and possessions are following her example. In this part of the world, New South Wales and Victoria have done, and are doing, much for the defence of their principal ports; but to quote from a work by Sir C. Pasley: "The strength of an empire, whether insular or continental, will be greater or less, with equal resources, in proportion to the facility with which its several ports can afford each other mutual assistance when attacked, and to the difficulty which an enemy may find in supplying and supporting his invading force." Although this had no reference to the Australias, and was written as far back as 1808, no stronger argument could be adduced in the present day in favour of Colonial Federation. In reference to the boast that the British fleet is so powerful that, therefore, it has command of the sea, Captain Colomb points out that this term "command of the sea" is a very vague one. "To some it conveys the idea of covering the sea with numerous fleets; to others the possession of a few ships more powerful than those of other nations. Few realise that the command of the sea can only be maintained by a scientific combination of three things—strategy, purely military force, and

purely naval power. The command of the sea is nothing more nor less than the command of the Imperial roads, the securing of the first lines of Colonial defences." Passing from theory to recent historical facts, he instances the career and exploits of the *Sumpter* and *Alabama* during what was but a civil war, or a schism of the Southern from the Federal States of America. The latter sent the *Powhattan*, the *Niagara*, the *Iroquois*, the *Keystone*, and the *San Jacinto* in pursuit of the *Sumpter*, and not one of them ever caught her. The destruction caused by the *Alabama* cost Great Britain, by the result of the settlement of "the *Alabama* claims," £3,200,000. All the naval force of the United States was powerless to arrest a single ship in her progress, simply because it was applied without reference to general principles which guide the distribution of force for the protection of communications. "There is no proportion between the force used in the interruption of sea communications as compared with the amount of force required to secure them. To cripple the action of a single steamer, several cruisers would be required at certain points. A regular attack upon sea communications, therefore, involves the employment of an enormous force in their defence; and as the stations and positions are necessarily fixed, so must the bases of operation be at hand to supply the wants of that defending force." The United States' Federal Naval force of 700 ships and 40,000 men was unable to prevent the interruption of American commerce in distant seas, though it blockaded all the ports of the rebellious States. If the Colonies are really in earnest in matters relating to their defence, Captain Colomb warns them it is time they should combine to force on the attention of the Imperial Parliament the neglected state of the Imperial roads on the high seas, and the necessity for devising means for their security; but he warns them they must be prepared to pay their fair share of the burden. Captain Colomb's paper is an able, well-reasoned production. His closing sentences would reflect credit on the ablest British soldier or statesman who has ever written or spoken on this grand question, so vital to the very existence of the British Empire. He says: "From whatever quarter of the Empire a cry for help comes—wherever the British flag waves over Englishmen struggling on their own ground for all they hold dear—it is there our home is in danger; there is the rallying-point of forces created for its defence. While we boast of armed hosts here and in the Colonies, whose proud motto is 'home defence,' they must survey the Empire to behold our home." His Grace the Duke of Manchester, at the close of Captain Colomb's remarks, in thanking

him in the name of the Society for his able and patriotic paper, said: "He hoped the Colonies would not rest satisfied until Federation had been achieved, and then the Colonies should insist upon their right in mutually contributing to the defence of the Empire, and after this was done, in controlling the disposition of the forces they had helped to maintain." We dealt with this very question, Federation, briefly in our issue of the 29th May, and expressed surprise that one of such vital importance should have been omitted from the programme of the last Intercolonial Conference. We repeat that we hope to find it taken up by the present Ministry, and dealt with in such a manner as may seem best calculated to induce its serious consideration throughout the Australias.

"THE BRISBANE COURIER,"

June 11, 1874.

"My relations with all foreign powers continue to be most friendly:" such, by a coincidence which can scarcely be accidental, were the exact words which the Queen addressed to Parliament on two late occasions separated by an interval of five years. In the one case they appeared in the speech from the Throne as prepared by Mr. Gladstone in 1869, after the election of a reformed House of Commons. In the other case they have been made to appear in the Queen's speech when Mr. Disraeli met Parliament after the result of the last general election. During the interval an event, the most memorable in modern history, has changed the map of Europe, and has re-distributed the balance of power. Yet, during that troubled period, the relations of the British Empire with foreign powers have been most friendly. That is, indeed, a subject for most profound thankfulness. Nor is it solely in dependence on our Imperial greatness or our national vitality, on the wisdom of those who rule or the self-control of those who are ruled, that we are justified in hoping for a continuance of the blessings of peace. Our trust is not wholly in ourselves, it is in a perception of our mutual dependence on influences unmeasured and immeasurable, which are bearing us on over the stream of time. "I pray"—and the prayer is doubtless the heartfelt aspiration of a great Queen and a united people—"I pray that the Almighty may never cease to guide your deliberations." This nevertheless, we hope, indicates a devout frame of mind by no means incompatible with complete warlike capacity. "To possess peace be prepared for war!" Such ever has been, and such unfortunately still is,

an indisputable condition of national greatness. It is even doubtful if it would inevitably conduce to the mental or material progress of man if the gates of Janus should be irrevocably closed. As a people, therefore, it is to be hoped that we shall continue to be animated by a wholesome sentiment of precautionary selfishness, and that, next to a humble but intelligent dependence on the Supreme disposition of events, we shall take care to keep such powder as we have in store perfectly dry, and the very best of its kind which can be obtained.

The party of which Mr. Gladstone has lately been the distinguished leader is accused of indifference to the national greatness, and we have often been told that Great Britain as a European power should concern herself more in European politics than she has lately done. In truth Great Britain is something more than a European power, and it is for that very reason, perhaps, that she is less concerned than she once was in Continental questions. But even as such she has shown no want of self-conscious dignity when the occasion for a display of it has been necessary, and no one will assert that under Mr. Gladstone's administration either the Army or the Navy have become less efficient than they were. The abolition of purchase in the Army has at least effected the reform of an abuse which was freely admitted, but which was so firmly entrenched in the stronghold of privilege that no British statesman had previously felt himself strong enough to attack it. But it is to Mr. Gladstone's successors in office that we are entitled to look, as we are told, for a fuller and more complete embodiment of all the accidents of Imperial greatness which are represented by effective military or naval dispositions. The "cheese-paring" which has so often been attributed to Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Lowe, will of course disappear from the calculations of Mr. Disraeli and Lord Derby. It is even more than possible that the question of "Colonial Defences" may assume a greater prominence in the programme of a party who have always claimed to promote the integration of the Colonies and the consolidation of the Empire. In the elucidation of such questions as these the Royal Colonial Institute affords no inappropriate medium for the expression of opinion. It is, in fact, not long since the subject was mooted in a paper read before the members. Captain Colomb then contributed an elaborate statement on "Colonial Defence," and endeavoured to show that National Defence could not in any worthy sense be held to refer to the United Kingdom only. The withdrawal of the regular troops from outlying and detached portions of the British Colonial Empire does not, we are happy to observe, meet with

any denunciation in this paper. The policy of concentration has indeed been accepted with almost unanimous concurrence, and in the case of what was thought to be the most vulnerable portion of the British Colonial Empire, it has called forth such an encouraging demonstration of military capacity for organisation, that no politician of any established reputation would dream of reverting to the principle of garrisoning the Colonies with men drawn from any other source than the Colonies themselves. It is now admitted on all hands that they are at least as capable of protecting themselves as the people of the United Kingdom are. But we take it that it was the purport of Captain Colomb to show that the defence of what is called the British Empire involves world-wide considerations, which cannot be narrowed to the confines of the islands separated from the continent of Europe by the British Channel and the German Ocean. The maintenance of what he calls the Imperial main lines of communication are essential to the successful defence of the Empire, and in effect he invites the Colonies to say how they would propose to assist one another in asserting the maritime supremacy of the British Empire, for that is really what it amounts to. It is time, Captain Colomb seems to think, that the young and vigorous British Colonies should rouse to action the mind of the mother country, grown "morbid" on the subject of invasion. To this end it is suggested that a royal commission should be appointed to inquire into the defence of Imperial communications. He infers that the result of such an inquiry would be to recommend the permanent strengthening of certain great strategic points which it would be in a position to define. It would also be its duty to determine the just limits of Imperial and Colonial responsibility in the matter of defence.

A royal commission for such a purpose might, no doubt, attract attention to the subject, and prepare the way for a consideration of that much larger subject, which includes the confederation of the British Empire. The Duke of Manchester tells us that in this matter we of the Colonies should claim this as our right. That is to say, he tells us we have a right to be an integral part of an Empire of which at present we are only dependencies. We should assert a right not only to contribute to the maintenance of these strategic points, but to guide and control the policy which maintains them. But, as His Grace says, "the House of Commons is so apathetic;" and we fear we may add the Colonies are also. They are growing, it is true, in wealth and strength, but as yet they are scarcely educated into a perception of the full benefits of these Imperial privileges, and of the Imperial responsibilities which await

them. In the meantime we here in Australia have scarcely yet entered on the threshold of the inquiry. We have not yet taken the still more needful and preliminary step of providing, after the example of Canada, for a Federal Government, competent to deal with questions involving such serious international questions.

The Royal Colonial Institute is no doubt a little in advance of the times, but perhaps there is no harm in that, for speculative opinions expressed within the bosom of such an association are sure to be wholesomely modified by the intense repugnance which the practical British-Colonial mind has to the consideration of questions involving the fortification of strategic points, and other matters of high Imperial consideration. Great as is the support which we now receive from our intimate and attached relationship to the mother country, it would be vain to deny that in the event of war the interests of British commerce and of international comity might be subserved in a higher and more Imperial sense by the absolute independence of the federated Canadian or Australian Colonies than they could be by the fortification of strategic points as recommended by Captain Colomb. We have said "in the event of war," but a war between Great Britain and a combination of great maritime powers is not a contingency which we can at present contemplate. Meanwhile, let us avoid that, and taking counsel from the source of all good counsel, let us keep our powder dry, and work on towards union and strength among ourselves.

"WANGANUI CHRONICLE AND PATEA AND RANGITIKEI ADVERTISER,"

June 5, 1874.

THE military defence of the Colonies is a subject about which much has been written, but we do not think it has ever been treated in so comprehensive and scientific a manner as by Captain J. C. R. Colomb, R.M.A., in a paper entitled "Colonial Defences," read by him to the Royal Colonial Institute. Captain Colomb urges, what must have struck everyone who has reflected upon this matter, that while under the late military system pursued by the Home Government, the armies and fleets of the Empire were scattered indiscriminately over the face of the globe, leaving the United Kingdom, which is the Imperial base of operations, destitute of the power of resistance; the present system is equally faulty, inasmuch as it goes to the opposite extreme, and confines itself to "the defence

of the Imperial base, to the exclusion of all considerations for the safety of our Imperial communications, the security of our Colonies, and the maintenance of our power in distant possessions." Hence it might happen in the event of war that the British Isles, safe from invasion, might be cut off from intercourse with other parts of the Empire, and the Empire be thus destroyed. Captain Colomb, like all soldiers, and in fact all persons who do not look upon the amount of imports and exports as the sole test of a country's greatness, is no disciple of the Manchester school, and argues that our military policy should embrace the defence of the whole Empire, and not of a particular part of it only, so that the congeries of States now ruled by Her Majesty Queen Victoria may be kept together, and be equally protected in time of war. That the possibility of isolating the United Kingdom from its dependencies, or of its "investment" as he terms it, is not a remote one, Captain Colomb shows clearly enough, by a train of close reasoning, which our limited space will not permit us to explain. The "self-reliant policy" does not meet with much mercy at his hands. The Colonies and other British possessions may raise volunteers and adopt other measures to guard themselves against attack, but such preparations will not be available for the supreme object of preserving the unity of the Empire, nor will they even be effectual for local safety. Captain Colomb says: "The power of resistance of each fragment of the Empire can only be measured by a comparison between its population, its geographical position and natural defensive advantages, and those of its possible enemy. It is simply ridiculous to tell any one of our West Indian Islands to be self-reliant, and to trust to its citizens to resis the war power of the United States. If this general rule is the basis of our plan of Imperial defence, and is to be applied, it means in plain English that in the unhappy event of a rupture with America, we offer that nation peaceable and quiet possession of 100,000 square miles of territory, and make over the lives of 1¼ millions of British subjects." This, however, would be carrying the self-reliant policy to an absurdity. By that policy we do not understand that England is to leave any portion of her territory to bear the full brunt of an enemy's attack, but only that each district is to provide all the means in its power to resist invasion, and England will do the rest. Surely the most ardent advocate of self-reliance would not argue that, in the event of the United States concentrating all their strength in an attack upon the West Indies, Great Britain should refrain from sending a soldier or sailor to their defence! Supposing England and the United States were at war, and the latter

made an attack upon Jamaica with all their military power, it is evident that the other parts of the British Empire would, for the time, be relieved from the danger of attack, and thus the concentrated assault could be met by a concentrated defence. Of course, a hostile alliance against England would be far more harassing and dangerous, but in that case, extreme danger would put the whole of the Empire on its mettle, nor do we fear that the result would be less favourable to England than similar perilous crises have been.

Of course, Canada and the West Indies occupy a very different military position to the Australias, but what strikes Colonists in this part of the world is their exposure to sudden raids upon their shipping and seaport towns. It would be a most difficult task for any foreign power to invade Australia or New Zealand, and even if an invading force effected a landing, its surrender or re-embarkation would very soon take place. But light armed cruisers might do us enormous damage by picking up Colonial merchantmen and levying contributions upon our seaports. There is not a seaport town in New Zealand which is protected against such a visitation. Not a torpedo has been sunk in one of our harbours, or a heavy gun planted to command them. Yet there are plenty of trained artillery-men in New Zealand, and sums of money have been spent upon "Defence Purposes" which would have furnished every town of the Colony with two or three guns of the heaviest calibre, whose presence would be quite enough to deter any vessel of the *Alabama* class from dropping in at Auckland or Wellington some fine morning and asking for a donation of £100,000, with the certainty of getting it. The subject has been discussed by secret committees of the General Assembly, and been reported upon to the Government by an experienced engineer officer; but nothing has been done. The danger is not visible, and procrastination is so easy. The Australian Colonies are little better in this respect, although Victoria has done something for the protection of Melbourne. But there is one important part of the military defence of these Colonies which has been entirely neglected, and that is the protection of our coal depôts. To the necessity of protecting the coaling stations of the Empire, Captain Colomb draws special attention, and the force of his reasoning is obvious now that sailing war-vessels are obsolete. The grand coaling station in the Southern hemisphere is Newcastle N.S.W., and that town ought unquestionably to be fortified. At present, we believe it is just as defenceless as the city of Wellington.

To secure lines of communication, a firm grasp of the points

which command them is requisite, and Captain Colomb points out how this is to be obtained. Two of his recommendations forcibly impress a New Zealand Colonist. One is that a naval arsenal should be established for the Eastern portion of the Empire. An Australian port he deems would be best adapted for the purpose; at the same time, the strategic importance of Bombay cannot be overlooked. The other recommendation is that the Imperial Government should take possession of the Fijis in order to command the line between Australia and Vancouver's Island. The military importance of the Fijis has been urged again and again by the Australian and New Zealand journals; and it may safely be asserted that unless the Imperial Government assumes their sovereignty in time of peace, the first thing the Australian Colonies will have to do for self-protection, upon war breaking out, will be to seize the group, lest it should become the refuge of a host of privateers. Imperial and local interests manifestly run concurrent here, as they do in reality throughout. But the difficulty is to impress that fact upon the Colonists. Theoretically they might agree with Captain Colomb upon the importance of maintaining the Imperial lines of communication; but if he asked them to accept the logical conclusion, and help to pay for the defence of those lines, they would draw back. They have become so accustomed to shirk their national duties, that it will take a long while to get them out of the selfish groove which they find so pleasant, but which is rapidly denuding them of patriotism and making them a set of mere money-hunters. A great calamity might possibly awaken in them a nobler spirit.

"PORT ELIZABETH TELEGRAPH,"

May 23, 1874.

Sooner or later the subject of Imperial Defence will compel attention. At present very few persons, and these men of little real weight in the Councils of the Empire, bestow any thought upon it. True, we hear much about National Defence, and are somewhat familiar with the question of Colonial Defence. As popularly understood, these two questions have very contracted meanings: the one signifying the protection of the British Islands, and the other the guarding of some particular Colonial border. To our thinking, however, National Defence can no more be considered an abstract question than Colonial Defence can be regarded as connected only with the defence of this or of that British Colony or depen-

dency. Imperial defence may be said to embrace the former two, as those terms are generally applied. Now, we regard Imperial defence as an obligation binding upon the nation at large. How this is to be attained a Captain J. C. R. Colomb, late of the Royal Marine Artillery, has endeavoured to show in a paper recently read by him at the Royal Colonial Institute. The title of the paper is "On Colonial Defence." The author, however, has not limited his inquiries within such a narrow compass, but has indulged his hearers and readers to a well-thought-out treatise on Imperial defence. A few extracts will suffice to indicate the general tendency of his remarks, and afford some conception of the aim and scope of his valuable paper. The principal question which suggested itself to the author's mind in dealing with the subject he had undertaken to discuss was, "What are the general principles on which the defence of the Empire must be based?" To this his reply is (1) that it is of vital importance that the safety of the Imperial communications be secured, and (2) that it is essential to the military strength of the Empire that the forces created or existing for the defence of one portion be so constituted as to be available for the defence of another. "The success of all operations of war, whether defensive or offensive," observes our author, "depends upon the disposition of force in such a manner as will best secure the base of operations, and ensure freedom of communication." "It is useless," he continues, "to do one without the other, for in the one case neglect of the rule must lead to a 'lock-out,' in the other to the 'lock-up' of military force. Our former disposition of our force (before the recall of the troops from the Colonies) risked the 'lock-out' of military force by rendering the capture of the base possible: our present plan endangers, nay courts, the 'lock-up' of military force at the base, by leaving our communications exposed, and our outposts undefended." In the late war, as our author reminds us, we saw first of all an attack upon the advanced positions in the lines of communication; next the cutting of the lines of communication; and lastly, as an inevitable consequence, Paris fell. The United Kingdom being our Imperial base, our author defines the Imperial main lines of communication to be (1) to British North America, across the North Atlantic; (2) to the West Indies; (3) to India, China, and Australasia, by the Mediterranean; (4) to India, China, and Australasia round the Cape of Good Hope; and (5) from Australasia and the Pacific round Cape Horn. Recognising the fact that communications, whether by sea or land, whether long or short, can only be secured by a firm grasp of the points which command them, he advises

their being put into a condition of defence. These points he enumerates as follows:—On the line to Canada—Halifax; to the West Indies—Bermuda, the Bahamas, Jamaica, and Antigua; to India, the East, and Australasia by the Mediterranean—Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, Bombay, Cape Comorin, and King George's Sound on the main line, with Trincomalee, Singapore, and Hongkong on its northern branch; to India and the East and Australia, round the Cape, Sierra Leone, Ascension, St. Helena, Simon's Town, the Mauritius, and King George's Sound; and from Australasia and Vancouver's Island round Cape Horn—Sierra Leone, Ascension, the Falkland Islands, and Sydney. The two latter points, however, he considers valueless for the defence of the line between Vancouver's Island and Australia without the Fiji Islands, now happily at the service of the Imperial Government. The natural rendezvous of commercial fleets being in our possession, our author recommends their being also at once put into an efficient state of defence. The lines of Colonial defences may, according to our author, be thus summarised: (1) The defence of their communications, which involves fortifying the Imperial strategic points, and the existence of a purely naval and a purely military force; the one equal to the task of keeping open the roads between the points, the other sufficient to secure those points from capture in the necessary absence of the fleet. (2) The interior line of sea defence, which must provide against the destruction by bombardment from the sea of naval resources at the strategic points in cases where the object cannot be secured by land batteries and military force. (It also includes similar provision for the protection of Colonial mercantile ports, to prevent their commercial reduction by enormous requisitions.) And (3) The defence of the soil of all Colonies and places not necessary to the Empire as military and strategic positions. "The communications of the Empire being the common property of all its component parts, each portion, according to the use it makes of them, has a direct interest in their defence, and should contribute to that object." We quite concur, and are likewise of the author's opinion when he says that the forces intended for the defence thereof must be Imperial, and not Colonial, and must be under the control of one directing head. If the mother country is ever to be induced to initiate a system of Imperial defence adequate to the requirements of the Empire, the Colonies should be mindful to urge her to this course, pledging themselves to do their diligence to contribute their fair share of the cost in men, material, and money. Captain Colomb recommends the issue of a Royal Commission to inquire into the defence of the Imperial

communications, and we cordially endorse his recommendation. This seaport, for instance, is at present defenceless, and yet, by a small expenditure, in the event of a war between England and another naval power, it might be protected from the depredations of some new *Alabama*. A few Armstrong guns, with the needful ammunition and a few torpedoes from the Imperial stores, with the Naval Brigade resuscitated, would impart a sense of security to the community it has not felt since the commencement of the Crimean War. A federation of the war forces of the Empire is indeed essential to its safety. We thank Captain Colomb for his useful paper, and we trust it will receive at the hands of the press of the Empire, and especially at the hands of the Colonial journals, that attention and that consideration which his well-timed and ably expressed suggestions so fully merit. The defence of the Empire may possiblybecome a popular cry when it is too late to save many of its most valuable outlying portions.

"QUEENSLAND TIMES."

IPSWICH, *June* 4, 1874.

THE question of Colonial Defences is one which has at various times, when there were rumours of wars, occupied a good deal of attention in England, but it has never yet been considered of sufficient importance, or urgency, to require being dealt with in a systematic manner. When Canada a few years ago was threatened with invasion, the Government of the day expressed its intention, if need were, to defend that dependency with its last man and its last ship; and no doubt, had the occasion arisen, thousands of British soldiers and millions of British money would have been poured across the Atlantic. At about the same period all the small military detachments which had previously been stationed in the Australasian Colonies were withdrawn, and we were, in effect, told that we must ourselves provide for the defence of our "hearths and homes." Some of our neighbours set to work, after a fashion, to prepare to receive an enemy: New South Wales did a little in the way of fortification at Sydney, as did Victoria at Port Philip Heads, Sandridge, and Williamstown; and the latter-named Colony went so far as to invest in a turret-ship. As a portion of a well-devised scheme each and all of these works would probably prove effective; isolated as they are, at the most they could but protect a very limited area. The thing, to be successful, must be treated in

a comprehensive way; and that unfortunately has not hitherto been the case. Except in conjunction with the Imperial naval and military forces, acting upon some pre-arranged plan, any puny efforts the Colonies might individually make would be comparatively futile.

By the mail just arrived we have received from Captain Colomb, R.M.A., a copy of a very able paper on "Colonial Defences" read by him before the members of the Royal Colonial Institute, in which a most elaborate scheme is developed. The author opens his subject by remarking that when Englishmen get frightened about what is falsely termed "our national safety," the only idea prevalent in the minds of nine persons out of ten is the guarding of the soil of the British Islands against invasion. In time of peace, he says, we like to talk of "our vast Colonial Empire, our extended commerce and interests in every part of the globe." But, when danger threatens, it is forgotten that "England with her Colonies is still a giant among nations, and that without them she would be a dwarf," and practically show a disbelief in the "giant" by seeking refuge in the arms of the "dwarf." He continues:—

"Look back a few years, and by past events test the truth of this assertion. Take the panic of 1859 and its results. We were in a state of wild alarm. We imagined that France threatened our safety, nay, our existence. We took fright at her successful armies and her powerful fleets capable of transporting those armies. We steadfastly shut our eyes to the fact that the possibility of the invasion of England involves, as a natural consequence, the possibility of investment, the cutting of the Imperial lines of communication, and attacks upon 'our vast Colonial Empire, our extended commerce and interests in every quarter of the globe;' we, in short, forgot everything except our personal safety, and instead of taking measures for defending the Empire, we were satisfied with taking measures for defending the hedgerows of England.

"Again, we owe change in our military system to the last panic. We are told by the Government of the day that England (the dwarf) is now better prepared to resist an attempted invasion than during any past period of her history. How has this result been attained? By rendering her Colonies and possessions (which swell the dwarf into the giant) less capable of resisting attack. The military policy has been to disarm the giant in order to arm the dwarf."

He then proceeds to inquire what are the general principles on which the defence of the Empire is to be based; and before giving a reply he says that it is essential to understand what is the Empire and what is vital to its existence. As a "rough sketch" of the

ground to be defended the Colonial dependencies are divided into ten groups, of which Australasia is one. Taking, of course the United Kingdom as the Imperial base, it is next shown that the lines of communication are—

1. To British North America across the North Atlantic.
2. To the West Indies.
3. To India, China, and Australasia by the Mediterranean.
4. To India, China, and Australasia round the Cape.
5. From Australasia and the Pacific round Cape Horn.

The Imperial base can be reduced in two ways :

1. By direct assault : invasion.
2. By indirect means : investment.

Captain Colomb then points out how indispensably necessary it is that the above routes should be kept open and protected, at the same time contending that this would be rendered impossible in the event of an investment of the British Isles, were all her naval and military force concentrated within and immediately around their shores. He lays great stress upon the necessity of keeping open the Channel, arguing that "it is our first line of defence against investment, and the front of our first line of Colonial defence;" and he asks, "of what avail is it if our Colonies, though protected in their own immediate neighbourhood, are 'locked out' from the mother country by a force in the Channel against which we are unable to contend?" Leaving the shores of Great Britain, a review of the different lines of communication with the various groups of Colonies is made, and several points are selected as suitable for military stations as supports to the vessels of the fleet. The importance of protecting every coaling station is particularly dwelt upon.

Captain Colomb urges the Colonies, if they are really in earnest in matters relating to their defence, to combine to force upon the attention of the Imperial Parliament the neglected state of the Imperial roads, and the necessity for devising adequate means for their security; but he warns us that we must be prepared to bear our fair share of the burden. And this is where a great difficulty would arise, for in time of peace—when alone such a scheme could be carried out—it is to be feared many a Colonial Legislature would fail to see the necessity for voting the requisite money, and the Imperial Government would be powerless to enforce payment. Having at great length explained the principles of his scheme, Captain Colomb gives the following summary of the lines of Colonial defence he proposes:—

1. The defence of their communications, which involves fortifying

the Imperial strategic points, and the existence of a purely naval and a purely military force; the one equal to the task of keeping open the roads between the points, the other sufficient to secure these points from capture in the necessary absence of the fleet.

2. The interior line of sea-defence, which must provide against the destruction by bombardment from the sea of naval resources at the strategic points in cases where that object cannot be secured by land batteries and military force. It also includes similar provision for the protection of Colonial mercantile ports to prevent their commercial reduction by enormous requisitions.

3. The defence of the soil of all Colonies and places not necessary to the Empire as military and strategic positions.

The thanks of the Colonies are due to Captain Colomb for the immense labour he must have bestowed upon his subject, which, it will be admitted by all, he has treated in a masterly manner. We have only been able to notice a few of the principal features of his scheme, which as a whole is well worthy the study of persons at all acquainted with military matters; and indeed of members of the Legislature.

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